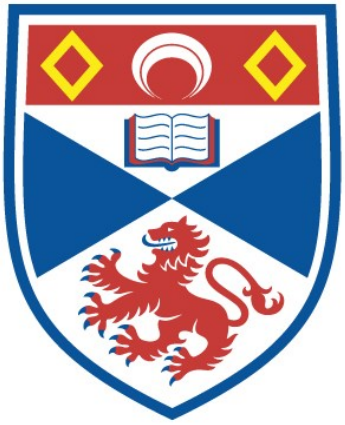
ETHICAL REALISM IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM FROM 1920 TO 1950

William George Shoop

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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A Thesis by

William George Shoop

Presented to

The University of St. Andrews

In Application for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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THIS THESIS IS GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED TO

MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH S. ATHA

WHO, BY THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF

THEIR CONFIDENCE, INSPIRED

A DREAM AND BROUGHT IT TO

REALITY.

D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by me, that the thesis is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree.

The research was carried out in St. Mary's College, the University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland.

William George Shoop

C A R E E R

I enrolled in Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, in 1946 and followed a course leading to graduation in 1950 with a degree of Bachelor of Arts.

In 1950 I enrolled in the Drake Divinity School and followed a course leading to graduation in 1953 with a degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

Research on this thesis was begun at the University of St. Andrews in 1961 and is now being submitted as a Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

P R E F A C E

Historical circumstances have had their profound effect upon individuals and the individual has, in turn, wielded a persistent influence on the course of history. The same could be said of social institutions: they have both shaped and been shaped by the large sweep of human behavior we call history. This dissertation is an attempt to discover the ways in which a number of Christian leaders formed and reformed the ethical relevance of the Christian faith in British and American Protestantism from the general period around 1920 to 1950.

In the bibliography we have listed all the major works of the five men studied. Under each author the major books are listed in chronological order followed by the periodicals and articles.

Although the major portion of research was done in Scotland, we have used American spelling in the text of the thesis. Where British publications are quoted, British spelling is retained.

To the entire faculty of St. Mery's College, University of St. Andrews, I am immeasurably grateful. The hallowed walls of an ancient university and the gracious hospitality of a competent and concerned faculty were a constant source of inspiration. I am especially indebted to Professor James A. Whyte, whose kindly criticisms made the burden of research a joy to carry.

William C. Shoop

St. Joseph, Missouri,
September 15, 1965

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PROLOGUE

The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth have been widely recognized as an optimistic age. Man was on the verge of creating a new world. Missionaries went forth to claim the world for Christ "in their generation." Men in other ages may have been thwarted by ignorance but knowledge was now making even the conquest of evil a possibility. Theories of biological evolution were applied to man and his moral progress. Utopia was now in sight, if only men would work cooperatively for its realization. Walter Rauschenbusch became the chief spokesman for the "social gospel" and its optimism. "For the first time in religious history we have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within bounds of human possibility."[1] Or as he later defined it, "the social gospel is concerned about a progressive social incarnation of God."[2]

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[1] Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1907), p. 209.

[2] Walter Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1917), p. 148.

According to Visser 'T Hooft, the social gospel movement was a "peculiar expression of American Christianity."[1] Visser 'T Hooft's study was an attempt to show how the social gospel emerged from the particular influences of American culture and religion. This thesis is an attempt to carry on the study where his ends.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the dream of earlier years was shattered. The vision of a rationally evolving humanity, which would abolish war, crime, disease and misery--not to say sin-- from the earth, was rapidly fading.

We have arbitrarily chosen these decades from 1920 to 1950 as a general period in which to observe the change which occurs in British and American Protestantism. Exact dates are not as relevant as the title suggests. Thought patterns are never so neatly arranged in chronological order. Some of the material studied was written before 1920 and a number of the books and articles were written after 1950.

During this general period between two world wars there seems to be emerging a new perspective which is best described as "Ethical Realism." In this connection we are

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[1] Willem A. Visser 'T Hooft, The Background of the Social Gospel in America, (St. Louis: Bethany Press, Paperback reprint, 1963), p. 32. The original work was published in Haarlem, Netherlands, 1928, by H. D. Tjeenk Willink and Zoon.

not using "realism" in its traditional philosophical sense but rather as a view of personal and social behavior which takes into account the harsh and practical realities of man's total existence. It is a confrontation with the "giveness" of reality and not its idealistic possibilities. It does not exclude the possibility of "ideals" but it does refuse to permit those ideals from isolating or insulating men from the more concrete demands imposed upon them by the actual social situation.

Realism is used in the sense of acknowledging the persistence and magnitude of evil. The ethical realists have reacted to the shallowness and superficial optimism of their predecessors. They are engaged in an attempt to rectify the idealism of the social gospel movement. "Inevitable progress" is replaced with "inevitable evil."

Realism may also be characterized by its concern for practical affairs. It refuses to devise systems of thought for their own sake but insists they must meet the daily needs of moral and religious living.

> "In religious realism an effort is made to deal fairly with all these diverse demands; and a considerable measure of neatness and finality is sacrificed, for the sake of maintaining touch with substantial masses of fact and with urgent practical concerns, though neither present facts nor short-term obligations can be permitted alone to dictate the theologians view."[1]

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[1] Robert L. Calhoun, God and the Common Life, (New York: Scribners, 1935), p. 78.

The realist tends to be guided not by the theoretical perfection or coherence of a system of thought but more by the practical demands of day to day life when all of its contingencies are taken seriously.

The problem with the realist is that he tends to choose what he thinks is the highest possible good in any situation. What he can never know is whether some other more demanding, difficult or idealistic alternative might also have been possible. Realism may be based on what is purported to be the "hard facts" when in reality the unpredictability of the other party or the alternative choice cannot be fully fathomed. In this sense, the facts are always beyond him. The idealist may risk all and lose. The realist risks only the possible and fails to achieve the higher and that would have depended upon his idealism. The ethical idealist may be tempted to ignore the facts and the ethical realist may be tempted to under-estimate the power of an ideal. John C. Bennett refers to realism as a position which avoids the illusions of both the "optimists" and the "pessimists." He thinks recent liberal optimism and orthodox pessimism based on original sin are both wrong.[1]

There is no implication that this twentieth century phenomenon of ethical realism is the first time it has appeared in the course of Christian history. One has

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[1]John C. Bennett, Christian Realism, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. x.

only to read Ernst Troeltsch's classic volumes on "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,"[1] to know that Augustine, Medieval Catholicism, Luther, Calvin and the Nineteenth Century Christian Socialists all represent for their own age a concern for man either in his vocation or his social structures which is equally realistic. In fact, what we may find in modern ethical realism is a recovery of some emphases that were once made and have been neglected or forgotten.

We have not only chosen a particular period of time but we have arbitrarily chosen the major works of five men who because of their positions and writings represent a variety of theological perspectives and yet reflect a common denominator of ethical realism. In the introduction to each chapter we have included a brief biographical sketch. William Temple, V. A. Demant and Maurice B. Reckitt are the influential figures in British Protestantism. Reinhold Niebuhr and Henry Nelson Wieman are the chief spokesmen for the new views emerging in American Protestantism.

Not only have we ignored a number of other men who were also involved in the development of ethical realism, but we have not considered the extent of their effect on the church as an institution, the man in the pew or the

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[1] German Edition, Gesammelt Schriften, 1912.
English Edition, Macmillan, 1931.

social order itself. For example, denominational pronouncements and ecumenical councils also reflect a change in emphasis. This material is so voluminous that it would require a separate study of its own.

This research into the writings of these five men is being done with the following questions in mind:

1. What is the theological position from which these men develop an ethic? Have they articulated an epistemological method?

2. How do they interpret the "Kingdom of God" as it relates to society and the meaning of history? What is their view of progress?

3. What is evil and how is its presence recognized? What do they mean by sin?

4. What is the relationship of the Christian Faith to social ethics? How is love related to justice? What is relative and what is absolute in Christian morality?

5. How do they practically apply their ethical insights to social issues? Are their ethical judgments in keeping with their presuppositions? To what extent do they recognize the inescapable realities in any given situation? How does the church and how do Christians relate to the problem of social change?

6. What is it these men have in common and are we justified in our proposition that they are "ethical realists"?

CHAPTER I

WILLIAM TEMPLE

Biographical Data

I. Theological Perspective

II. Dialectical Realism

III. Morality and Ethics

IV. The Kingdom of God and the Social Order

V. The Christian and War

VI. Practical Problems
   - A. Politics
   - B. Economics
   - C. Marriage

William Temple

Biography

1881 - Born, October 15

1895 - Scholar of Rugby

1904 - Fellow and Lecturer of Queen's College, Oxford

1909 - Ordained Priest, Canterbury Cathedral, December 19

1910 - Headmaster of Repton School

1914 - Rector of S. James's, Piccadilly, London

1919 - Canon of Westminister

1921 - Bishop of Manchester

1929 - Enthroned Archbishop of York, January 10

1932
1934 - Gifford Lectures, Glasgow, Nature, Man and God

1942 - Enthroned Archbishop of Canterbury, April 23

1944 - Died, October 26, (age 63)

I. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

William Temple was undoubtedly the dominant figure in English Church life during the first half of the twentieth century. He possessed a magnanimity of spirit, a penetrating theological mind and an unrivalled concern for social issues. As Archbishop of Canterbury during two years of World War II, his leadership of the Church was consumed by the needs of a nation at war. Because of his untimely death, both the Church and the world were denied the benefit of his thoughtful and concerned leadership in the ways of peace.

While Archbishop of York, Temple was the key figure in the formation and guidance of the Malvern Conference (1941). He clearly saw the war as a crisis of civilization and the issue facing the Church was the part it could and should play in the process of social reconstruction. The gathering at Malvern was an attempt to discover the mind of the Anglican Church on social issues.

As Temple saw it, they all agreed on the ultimate principle of "love thy neighbor as thyself;" but no one knew how the principle could be applied to the problems of a trade union, a board of directors in industry or the issues facing a politician in government. "We lack what one school of Greek moralists called "middle axioms"--those subordinate maxims which connect the ultimate principles with the

complexities of the actual historical situation in which action has to be taken."[1]

The discovery, formulation and application of Christian principles to the social order was the central issue of Temple's life. No one labored with more patience in the effort to find the principles, nor did anyone match his sense of urgency in seeing that they were practically applied.[2]

One indication of Temple's influence was the extent to which he was a contributing factor in the movement of British society toward the Welfare State[3] and more particularly in the election of a Labor Government immediately after World War II. This is an intriguing question which may never be answered but no one can deny that Temple did play a significant part in the new shape of things that were to come.

Our need, at the moment, is to observe how Temple's mind developed and to see how his ethical views make him a realist.

The essence of Temple's theological position may be found in Mens Creatrix (1917). A further elaboration of his

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[1] Malvern 1941, (London: Longmans, Green & Co.,1941), p.10.

[2] William Temple, "Begin Now," The Christian News-Letter, Edited by J. H. Oldham, No. 41, August 7, 1940.

[3] The National Church and the Social Order, Report of the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly, (Westminster S.W. 1: Church Information Board of the Church Assembly, 1956). William Temple is included in this report under a chapter entitled "The Transition to the Welfare State," Chapter XII, p. 128.

basic insights is found in Christus Veritas (1924) and in his Gifford Lectures, Nature, Man and God (1932-34). The latter two works are in many ways an enlargement of his more creative contribution in Mens Creatrix. This treatise had its inception in 1908 while he was lecturing in Philosophy at Oxford. "At that time I had the presumption to believe that I was myself destined to be a philosopher."[1] It is in the preface to this book that he designates the master-influences upon his own thought: St. John, Plato and Browning. It is interesting to note that one was a philosopher and another a poet. This may account for the fact that Temple's theology is seldom dominated by biblical or doctrinal considerations which exclude the contributions of science, morality and the arts.

Temple was firmly convinced that "a perfect theology and a perfect philosophy would coincide."[2] For him Christianity recognizes that there can only be one Truth. "It insists that the Life of Christ is an act of God; Christ did not emerge out of the circumstances of His time; He is not just the supreme achievement of man in his search for God; He is God Himself, 'who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven'."[3] Temple betrays a questionable view of the

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[1] William Temple, Mens Creatrix, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), Preface, p. vii.

[2] Ibid., p. 3.

[3] Ibid.

Christian revelation and an exaggerated view of philosophy when in reference to Christ he says, "He is that which philosophers would have found if they could have collected the whole universe of facts and reasoned with perfect cogency concerning them."[1] Did he believe that one could reason his way to Jesus Christ through the collection of the "universe of facts" if the historic Jesus were not a part of those facts? He appears not to accept this possibility when he goes on to say, "The Christian who is also in any degree a philosopher will not claim that by reason he can irrefragably establish his faith; indeed, it is possible that his search may lead him to nothing by perplexity, from which he saves himself only by falling back upon his unreasoned convictions."[2] According to Temple's previous claim, one would think the philosopher might legitimately feel that he had either not gathered all of the facts or had not reasoned cogently. Rather than falling back on his unreasoned convictions, he might appropriately recognize his faulty reasoning.

For Temple the results of theology and philosophy were identical but their methods were different. "Philosophy working inwards from the circumference, and theology working outwards from the centre, have not yet met, at least in such a way as to present a single system whose combination of

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[1] Ibid., p. 3.

[2] Ibid.

comprehensiveness and coherence would supply a guarantee of its truth."[1] Here is a clue to Temple's theological perspective. He saw the possibility of a real unity between faith and knowledge. He was, however, not blind to the difficulties inherent in both methods. "The difficulty about Deduction is that we have no certain right to our starting point. The difficulty about Induction is that we have no certain right to any conclusion."[2] Temple apparently held theology in one hand and philosophy in the other with a full awareness of the weakness in each. "Yet even at the last the security is of Faith and not of Knowledge; it is not won by intellectual grasp but by personal loyalty; and its test is not in logic only, but in life."[3]

Here Temple appears to give his ultimate allegiance to faith. As we shall see later on, when there is a conflict of faiths, Temple resorts to reason for a solution of the problem. What is the place of knowledge in determining the validity of a "personal loyalty"? Further, what is the role of knowledge in the kind of test that life itself provides?

Mens Creatrix was intentionally an attempt to state a philosophical view and by 1924 Temple had written a companion

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p.15.

[3] Ibid., p. 4.

volume, Christus Veritas, which was to be primarily theological. Here he confesses that he holds the Christian revelation in full view "but for the purposes of exposition I have found it better to work in from the circumference to the heart of the Christian position, and then out again."[1] Even in his "theological" work he held the Christian revelation in view as a predetermined destination and not as a starting point. No matter where he started on the circumference he knew where his thought would lead him. Not that man could philosophize his way to God but rather all the efforts of mind to find fulfillment led only to incompleteness. The burden of his argument in Mens Creatrix was to show religion as the culmination of science, art and morality. Christus Veritas is a further substantiation of the same thesis.

> All of these efforts of Mind in search for satisfaction demand the actuality of an ideal to which they point but which they never reach. Ethics suggest a Will which is perfectly self-determined, and yet is active altogether in love, such a Will, if it be made manifest, will satisfy the aspiration of Art, for its manifestation will claim and deserve eternal contemplation; such a Will, if it control the Universe, is the very principle of unity which Science seeks, for Will, while remaining constant in its Purpose, chooses now this, now that, as a means to its end, and is the only principle which, self-explanatory in itself, explains what it orders or informs. Is there such a Will? Only if there is, can the Universe be deemed

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[1] William Temple, Christus Veritas, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), Preface, p. vii.

> rational; Man's creative mind can find satisfaction only if there be a Divine creative Mind with which it may have communion."[1]

It was an obvious characteristic of Temple's theology that he avoided extreme positions. This refusal to make radical distinctions accounts for Walter M. Horton describing him as a "representative central theologian."[2] We have illustrated this tendency in briefly summarizing his views on theology and philosophy. What appeared on the surface as opposites, where many took their stand on one side or the other, Temple could hold together. For some theologians the paradox is held in a creative tension. In Temple opposites became supplementary. They do not pull against each other so much as work in harmony with each other. In spite of the apparent contradiction, one side of the contradiction is dependent on the other.

What emerges from this Hegelian dialectical influence on Temple is a concern for the synthesis. Notice how he tried to resolve the thorny problem of Good and Evil by defining Evil as "a necessary means to the greatest good that the nature - not of things, but - of Good itself makes possible."[3] He then takes a particular form of good and shows how evil becomes an essential feature in it:

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[1] Mens Creatrix, p. 258.

[2] Walter M. Horton, Contemporary English Theology, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 148.

[3] Temple, op. cit., p. 267.

> One of the most conspicuous forms of good is Victory. A world in which there was no victory would be, so far, an inferior world. But if there is to be victory, there must be opposition. To demand the good of victory without the existence of an antagonist is to demand something with no meaning. It is no limitation of the divine power to say that it could not give us the good of Victory without any antagonist, for this good is not a real or possible entity; the words are strictly meaningless.[1]

Temple's resolution of the problem is no easy-going optimism. Here is a synthesis which acknowledges the reality of evil but at the same time fathoms the depths of tragedy and extols the virtue of the victorious struggle. This particular insight reveals an inspiring depth and richness in Temple's thought:

> This, then, is the philosophy of tragedy. Good by its self-opposition and essential defect gives occasion to its enemy evil; in the struggle evil is destroyed, but much glorious good -- all of the good that is glorious -- perishes with it. As we behold, we rejoice in the immeasurable greatness of man; we feel terror at the evil and pity for the good; and we accept without protest, but not without lament, the destruction of so much good by the evil to which it gave opportunity. Man is so great in and through the struggle, and good so glorious, that we would not have the evil simply abolished; for that would be to abolish the struggle, and with it much of the greatness and the glory. The world revealed in tragedy is a noble world, and better than any we can conceive -- yet it is terrible and pitiable and sad beyond belief. We would not alter it; yet we cannot be content with it. This is the Philosophy

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[1] Ibid., p. 268.

> of Tragedy; and if it is not the last word of human philosophy, at least we know that no philosophy can by any possibility be true which does not contain it, or which diminishes in any degree whatsoever the depths of its exalted sad solemnity.[1]

Later we shall see how this integrating ability affects Temple's view of progress, history and the social order in matters of practical concern. From a theological point of view we can see how and why evil is a necessary part of the process of history. There were three essential forms of evil and they each had their own peculiar utility: "Intellectual Evil or Error, Emotional Evil or Suffering, Moral Evil or Sin."[2] There could be no goodness in the historical process without the alternative forms of evil. "Error is an element in the very goodness of the search for truth."[3]

A quick look at his definition of sin may also contribute to our subsequent study of his ethics. For Temple, "the essence of sin is self-will. By pride Satan fell in the myth, and the myth is right. Of the forms of self-will, complete indifference to other people is the worst."[4] He saw that hatred at least recognized the other person as

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[1] Ibid., p. 151.

[2] Ibid., p. 273.

[3] Ibid., p. 275.

[4] Ibid., p. 285.

being of importance while indifference treated him as though he did not matter. We ought to note that sin for Temple was self-will that breaks off human relations and was not fundamentally a severance of our relationship to God.

It is not at all clear whether Temple really bases morality on love of God or love of man. "Our ordinary morality does not indeed depend upon a love of God; but it does depend on a relation to other men the nature of which is only clearly manifest in love of men; and a morality which is finally and universally secure can only be attained through a love of God which answers His love for us."[1] Temple seems to agree with the biblical injunction that love of God should have priority, but sin (self-will) in its worst form is the indifference with which one man can treat another.

As a further illustration of Temple's synthesizing tendency let us see how he tried to transcend the age old dichotomy of God's grace and man's effort:

> Pelagianism is Ethical Atheism. The work is His; yet we are not abolished or absorbed. It is our hearts that love, but it is His love that draws our hearts to Him.[2]

This remarkable capacity to resolve theological conflicts is a quality which will be seen as a decided asset

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[1] Ibid., p. 287.

[2] Ibid., p. 290.

in his handling of controversial issues. Our reaction at this stage is that this mixture of philosophy and theology has led Temple into the lofty realm of polished generalities. It is small wonder, however, that he would not in good conscience refuse an invitation to lecture on "natural theology." This requirement of the Gifford Lectures could easily be met by one whose sympathies tended so much in this direction. Natural Theology, for him, did not have the final answer but it did point to a need that could only be met by a revealed religion.

Temple's earlier writings represent a period of fertile intellectual activity. Horton sees him as a "liberal" who later moves more to a central theological position.[1] In a personal letter, Temple writes of a "particular modification" in his thought but does not see it as a substantial change.[2] Temple's ability to state sympathetically both sides of an issue makes it difficult to show where there was a definite movement away from any firmly held views. Only by quoting him out of context could you show where he abandoned some of his earlier propositions. His growth is not so much a matter of radical alteration as it is a dynamic change in emphasis. The final ten years of his life were not devoted to mature theological reflection. His life and writings during this period reflected a deep and abiding concern for the problems of personal and social ethics.

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[1] Horton, op. cit., pp. 148-151.

[2] F. A. Iremonger, William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, His Life and Letters, (London: Oxford Press, 1948), pp. 537-538.

II. DIALECTICAL REALISM

In the preface to his Gifford Lectures, Nature, Man and God, Temple suggests that at one time he had "thought of giving to these Lectures a descriptive sub-title: A Study in Dialectical Realism."[1] Walter M. Horton describes this as "a break with his period of idealistic liberalism."[2] It is difficult to understand the grounds on which this assertion can be made. Temple's approach here is quite in keeping with the methods and conclusions recorded in Mens Creatrix. What has obviously impressed Temple is the impact of the Communist brand of Dialectic Materialism. This is the stimulus which prompted him to say:

> But I believe that the Dialectical Materialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin has so strong an appeal to the minds of many of our contemporaries, and has so strong a foundation in contemporary experience, that only a Dialectic more comprehensive in its range of apprehension and more thorough in its appreciation of the inter-play of factors in the real world, can overthrow it or seriously modify it as a guide to action. I certainly have not supplied that more comprehensive and more thorough Dialectic; but I have sought to make a contribution towards it.[3]

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[1] William Temple, Nature, Man and God, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1935), Preface, p. ix.

[2] Horton, op. cit., p. 151.

[3] Temple, op. cit.

Temple's earlier theological writings had an apologetic emphasis aimed at the scientists and philosophers. His urgent defense of the faith in the decade of the thirties was prompted by the Communist interpretation of economically conditioned man in society and history. His study led him to the startling and much quoted conclusion, "Christianity is the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions."[1]

This "more comprehensive" dialectic developed in his Gifford Lectures involved four transitions:

1. The first transition is from Nature to Mind. "If, as science has developed, Mind is part of Nature, then Nature (to contain such a part) must be founded in Mind."[2] Up to a point, he agrees with the Marxists that consciousness and apprehension emerge within the World-Process. Matter appears to precede Mind but Temple sees the necessity of Mind to explain the process in which Mind occurs:

> The picture of the World-Process as existing for aeons before it contained minds to apprehend it suggests at first that its non-mental functions must contain the ground of its mental functions -- both of their occurrence and of their nature. But in fact all attempts to trace in evolution an explanation of the emergence of mind have totally failed. And if this is not explained, the Process is not explained, for this is an element in the Process. On the other hand we find that Process is akin to Mind, that Mind arises in the course of it, and that Mind does exhibit what is essentially the thing required --

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[1] Ibid., p. 478.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

> a self-explanatory principle of origination. It is then more reasonable to test the hypothesis that Mind contains the explanation of the World-Process than to refuse to test it.[1]

Here is where he parts company with Marxism and Naturalism. Temple acknowledges the "scientific" approach to the process of Nature that contains Mind but sees Mind as the only possible explanation of it. He found no basis for believing that the process was self-explanatory. "The more completely we include Mind within Nature, the more inexplicable must Nature become except by reference to Mind."[2]

2. The second transition is from Mind to transcendent Personality.

> If I regard the Ultimate Principle as non-personal, I cannot afterwards regard any occurrence as a purposive self-revelation of that Principle; so I can only estimate its character, or its relation to my valuations, by observing the average tendency of the world as experienced. But if I regard the Ultimate Principle as Personal, then I am at least at liberty to interpret as acts of specific self-revelation on the part of that Principle any which can make good their claim to be so regarded; and I am then also at liberty -- rather am bound in reason -- to take these as indications of the character of the Ultimate Principle even though the whole evidence of ordinary experience told the other way. In doing so I shall act by faith and not by knowledge, but by a reasonable faith.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 132.

[2] Ibid., p. 133.

[3] Ibid., p. 264.

His asserton that the Ultimate Principle must be regarded as Personal permits him to interpret specific acts within a predetermined framework. This is fundamentally an act of faith but if challenged by another act of faith Temple would insist that his act of faith was more "reasonable." This transition is another hypothesis grounded in a reasonable faith but lacking in completion until supported by his next transition. Part One of Nature, Man and God includes his first two major points under the heading, "The Transcendence of the Immanent."

3. His third transition in the dialectic process is that transcendent Personality reveals itself to finite minds. We now move into the second part of his lectures entitled, "The Immanence of the Transcendent."

Temple's logic has led him to the conclusion that the entire world-process is a revelation of transcendent Personality. He has done so without making an appeal to the particular revelation of God in Christ.

> Revelation so conceived is the full actuality of that relationship between Nature, Man and God which throughout these Lectures we are seeking to articulate. First there is the world-process, which, in its more complex components, if not throughout, is organic in principle; secondly, we have the fact that certain organisms, to wit ourselves, occurring as episodes of the world-process, are able to apprehend and in part to comprehend that process; thirdly, we infer from this that the process, in order to give rise to such episodes in its course, must be regarded as itself grounded in a mental principle; fourthly, enquiry into that interaction of the intelligent organism with its environment, which we call thought, compels the assertion that the principle

> in which the world-process is grounded, is not only mental but spiritual and personal; fifthly, this leads us to the conviction that the process itself and all occurrences with it--including the intelligences of men--are due to the purposive action of that Person whose reality has been established as the governing fact of existence. He guides the process; He guides the minds of men; the interaction of the process and the minds which are alike guided by Him is the essence of revelation.[1]

Within this third transition the problem of evil appears in the freedom of the self-assertive finite mind. "The mind by a necessary tendency of its own nature attaches more importance to values which find their actualisation in itself than those which find it elsewhere; ...So he becomes not only the subject of his own value judgements, which he can never cease to be, but also the centre and criterion of his own system of values, which he is quite unfit to be."[2]

If this unfitness is inherent in man's finitude then God must in some sense share the responsibility for evil. Temple agrees that it is not the principle of self-hood, as such, which is evil but self-centeredness. He is not at all clear in showing us what is the cause of this "necessary tendency" of the self. Is he really suggesting that this "unfitness" of the self is a result of its finitude? Here in typical Temple style he resolves the problem:

> Because it was not necessary that we should err, we cannot say that our sin is itself God's act; it is our fault, not His, in the first instance. But that we are

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[1] Ibid., p. 312.

[2] Ibid., p. 365.

> finite selves is directly due to God's act, and we cannot doubt that God foresaw the issues of conferring self-hood upon finite beings, so that sin falls within His purpose, and is even part of it, though it cannot be said that He directly willed or wills it.[1]

After speaking of a "necessary tendency" of mind, he can now contradict himself and say that "it was not necessary that we should err." Earlier we saw how Temple made evil a "necessary means to the greatest good." (p.15) God evidently permits evil in order to win a spiritual victory over it. If God has allowed evil in order to show us how good He is by delivering us from it, then God, in Temple's terms, would be guilty of the self-centeredness which he condemns in man. If Temple were not such a committed Theist, his deductive logic might very well lead him to a different conclusion. On the other hand, if he were not so much of a philosopher, he might acknowledge the difficulty of finding a solution to the problem of evil. Not that the problem is forever insoluble, but that man in his present state simply does not have enough evidence to fully explain the emergence of evil, let alone mind and matter. Temple concedes as much when he says: "The created universe, at least as known to us, is historical; it is marked at every point by successiveness or process. That process is traced out by the sciences of astronomy, geology and biology. But the data for a comprehensive science of the universe are not available."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 369.

[2] Ibid., p. 473.

The third transition is concluded with a lecture (XIX) on "The Sacramental Universe." All the relations of the World-Process are summed up in this conception:

> It is not simply the relation of ground and consequent, not of cause and effect, nor of thought and expression, nor of purpose and instrument, nor of end and means; but it is all of these at once. We need for it another name; and there is in some religious traditions an element which is, in the belief of adherents of those religions, so close akin to what we want that we may most suitably call this conception of the relation of eternal to history, or spirit to matter, the sacramental conception.[1]

This sacramental interpretation insures the primacy and supremacy of spirit over matter. Matter becomes "the effectual expression or symbolic instrument of spirit."[2] If the physical were permitted to go on its own way without the direction of spirit, the unity of man's life would be broken. "The material world, with all man's economic activity, becomes a happy hunting-ground for uncurbed acquisitiveness, and religion becomes a refined occupation for the leisure of the mystical. It is in the sacramental view of the universe, both its material and its spiritual elements, that there is given hope of making human both politics and economics and of making effectual both faith and love."[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 481-482.

[2] Ibid., p. 492.

[3] Ibid., p. 486.

This third transition has consumed a great deal of Temple's energy because it is compatible with "Natural Theology" and yet a contradiction of Marxist "Dialectical Materialism." Temple is convinced that "if Materialism once becomes Dialectical, it is doomed as Materialism; its own dialectic will transform it into Theism."[1] Once you make room for "spirit" you are compelled to acknowledge its sovereignty.

4. The fourth transition is not so clearly or elaborately stated. By implication, it can be thus summarized: From a view of general revelation we move to God's self-revealing redemptive activity in Jesus Christ. A general self-revelation of transcendent Personality does not adequately deal with the problem of evil. "And if man cannot generate within himself the means of his deliverence, that deliverence must come from without or not at all. Natural Theology cannot say whether in fact it has been offered; but it can enquire into the conditions to be fulfilled by any Gospel that promises deliverence. It can diagnose the disease and indicate the functions of the remedy."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 490.

[2] Ibid., p. 514.

"Natural Theology ends in a hunger for that Divine Revelation which it began by excluding from its purview."[1] This is precisely the point that Temple made in Mens Creatrix. Natural Religion has a hunger that can only be satisfied in the Christian Revelation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 520.

III. MORALITY AND ETHICS

Temple's views on morality are first enunciated in a series of lectures given at Oxford in 1910. They appear in book form as The Nature of Personality. Temple perceived and accepted the fact that it was man's social conditioning which made him an individual human being and this involvement in human society was the source of morality. "It is clear that a human being cut off from society is not fully human; that our ideals and temptations alike come largely from society; and that our significance and value are almost wholly derived from our relation to society."[1]

Our participation in society makes us capable of morality and our awareness of membership in society endows us with a moral sense. Temple saw that it was a matter of primary importance for ethics that we should find out what we mean by society. Some of his definitions in The Nature of Personality are repeated and developed in Mens Creatrix.

> Plainly a Society is a collection of persons united by some non-physical bond.[2]
>
> The essential basis of society is community of purpose.[3]

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[1] William Temple, The Nature of Personality, (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1911), p. 62.

[2] The Nature of Personality, p. 52; Mens Creatrix, p.182.

[3] The Nature of Personality, p. 53; Mens Creatrix, p. 183.

There may be a "community of purpose" but there is no such thing as a social consciousness. "There is no evidence whatever for the view that there is a social consciousness anywhere in society other than the consciousness of the individuals that they are members of the social body."[1]

It is interesting to note that society can have a "Purpose" but cannot, as such, have "consciousness." Earlier Temple has said that "the two most prominent elements in our conception of Persons are character and purpose."[2] He has mixed his terminology by referring to purpose as a quality of Persons and later attributing purpose to non-conscious Society:

> We thus find that morality consists in the subordination of our own Purpose and subconscious aims to the Purpose of Society of which we are members--in the last resort of the human race--though that Purpose is not known to us or to any one else on earth. This incidentally involves an inability on our part to determine with absolute certainty what is right or wrong in any circumstances. But it also involves something of far greater practical importance, namely that we must always take the moral convictions which have grown up out of the experience of the race as our guide.[3]

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[1] The Nature of Personality, p. 58.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Ibid., p. 60.

There is obviously an inseparable connection between the individual and society. Each makes an essential contribution to the other and Temple will not be forced into dissecting them or giving one a priority over the other.

> Of course it does not follow that society is any less real than the citizens or that they are primary while it is secondary. All we have said is that, in the living fact which we call society, the citizens are the seat of consciousness. And yet this purpose is not consciously present in any of the members, and it only exists in them at all so far as they constitute the society.[1]

One may be quick to accuse Temple of courting a flat contradiction only to find that he is lending support to both sides of a paradox. For example, Temple has suggested that "morality consists in the subordination of our own Purpose...to the Purpose of Society."[2] There he was saying that man must serve society. Later he implies that society must serve man:

> Inasmuch as man is social, the State and the Church must be maintained even at great cost; but it must not be forgotten that the happiness or character they aim at producing can only be actualized by their individual members, and the individuality of the State is subservient to that of the citizens, because its function is subservient. Individuality is therefore ascribed to persons with more right than to anything else.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 59.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

[3] Mens Creatrix, p. 79.

This thesis of Temple's that our sense of moral obligation arises out of membership in society appears to make morality too much of a humanly conditioned affair. Morality is so fundamentally social that he denies the possibility of an individual having any moral responsibility to himself. "Duty is a term never applied strictly to the isolated individual. ...The isolated individual may be wise or foolish; he cannot be moral or immoral. An atheistic debauchee upon a desert island is not liable to moral censure."[1] This same theme is defended six years later in another work:

> But man is by nature a social being, and the moment society exists, the difference between right and wrong comes into being with it. For all the terms that go with right, such as "duty," "ought," "obligation," and so forth, have reference to a social context; there can be no moral law with an entirely isolated being, for the moral law regulates the relations between persons.[2]

A. E. Taylor levels a valid criticism at Temple when he suggests that "Robinson Crusoe should not drink himself to death."[3] Taylor is surely nearer the truth when he insists that we can and do have moral obligations to ourselves:

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[1] The Nature of Personality, p. 51.

[2] Mens Creatrix, p. 195.

[3] A. E. Taylor, Mind, Vol. XXVII - 1918, (London: Macmillan), p. 224.

> What persons like myself deny is not that society is an indispensable instrument for the acquisition of moral responsibility. (A point made by Temple.) We deny that all the obligations recognised in an adequate morality are obligations to 'society' or to members of it other than ourselves.[1]

We have seen that morality is socially created and socially determined. "What acts are right and what acts are wrong? -- is determined for the most part by the tradition of that civilisation, by which the individual forming the judgment has been moulded."[2] But the further question arises, how does man know the right from the wrong? Two of his works give the same answer:

> The term 'good' is irreducible; the fact it expresses cannot be expressed in the terms of any particular science. And we must note that utility is not goodness; the value of what is useful does not lie in itself but in the result to which it conduces. About intrinsic value there can be no argument; one approves or not and there's an end. And if the individual differs from an expert, he can only be called upon to look more closely. As Mr. F. H. Bradley has argued--'Our sense of value and in the end, for every man his own sense of value is ultimate and final. And since there is no court of appeal, it is idle even to inquire if this sense is fallible.'[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 225.

[2] Mens Creatrix, p. 195.

[3] Nature of Personality, p. 72. Mens Creatrix, p. 180.

Temple becomes more specific when he says that our values are known "by intuition alone, though the faculties of intuition may be trained."[1] This reliance on intuition would seem to lead Temple into a hopeless subjectivism. Elsewhere he was not content with intuition in isolation from social conditioning, the experience of the race or from reason as a solution to the moral question.

> But our social nature saves us. It may be impossible and undesirable for every individual to form the same value-judgments; but there are those which belong to him as the particular member of society that he is; we are not left to mere caprice because we are not isolated individuals. Each man is a unique and irreplaceable member of the system with his own bit of value of things to realise; and in developing his moral faculties, his devotion to the public good, he will reach the right value judgments.[2]

Our sense of morality is not only socially created but socially validated. If our intuition is checked by society and the experience of the race then how can we be certain that the purposes of society are good? Temple has said that the purpose of the human race "is not known to us or to anyone else on earth."[3] His conclusion is that we simply cannot know with any absolute certainty what is right or wrong in any given set of circumstances.[4]

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[1] Mens Creatrix, p. 179.

[2] Nature of Personality, pp. 72-73.

[3] Ibid., p. 60.

[4] Ibid.

Our inability to know what is right or wrong is coupled with a certainty that there is a clear cut distinction to be made. In spite of his understanding of the "circumstantial" character of ethics, he is inclined sooner or later in the course of his discussion to conclude that an act is either good or evil. "So we may say, without fear of contradiction, that the distinction between right and wrong is itself absolute and ultimate."[1] He does not seem to recognize that good acts may have some evil in them and evil acts may have some good in them. His ethical relativity is concerned with the process of making moral decisions but in the last analysis we may be incapable of knowing whether any act is good or evil for the simple reason that we are unable to fully trace its consequences. What he does not suggest is the possibility of a genuine mixture of the good and evil in all our behavior.

At this point we can detect another weakness in Temple's thought. He fails to give due emphasis to the evil which is often inherent in social structures. He seems to give a superficial sanction to social "purposes." Surely there must be some criteria for the judgment of society. As suggested above, Temple implies that the morality of the state, for example, is determined by the extent to which it recognizes the rights and values of the individual. The possibility that one social group might be involved in immoral behavior toward another social group

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[1] Mens Creatrix, p. 195.

goes unnoticed. Nor does he seem to recognize that society creates concentrations of power which greatly enhance man's capacity to do both good and evil.

By the time of his Gifford Lectures, Temple has enunciated another solution to the moral problem:

> Whereas in aesthetic questions the last appeal is to perception--a rationalised perception no doubt-- in ethical questions the last appeal is to reason, even if to a perceptive reason. For when the conscience of the individual is in conflict with the conscience of his fellows, the only way to resolve the conflict is to find by critical analysis the principles on which both unwittingly rely.[1]

If morality and conscience are socially conditioned, then how can reason become the judge of their validity? Does reason have the capacity to fully fathom the "moral absolute" and pass judgment upon our principles? What if our principles are socially created? Can reason then be made the court of final appeal? Is there any legitimate place for reason in the determination of morality? Temple is now suggesting that reason gives us a perspective which transcends our social conditioning. But reason independent of circumstances is hardly the "final appeal."

> In other words Ethics can never be an exact science, and absolute obligation therefore attaches not to the act, but to the will. It is my absolute duty to will

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[1] Nature, Man and God, pp. 175-176.

> the right; but there is no act which it is my absolute duty, independent of circumstances, to do or not to do.[1]

Can one have an "absolute duty to will the right" independent of circumstances? Most men "will" to do the right but the test of their will is in what they do within any given set of circumstances. This "will to do the right" may be a misdirected will. Temple is not critical enough of the deceptive character of the "good will." Most evil is performed under the guise of good intentions. Would it not be more helpful to say that we are absolutely under obligation to discover what is the "good will" and what are its demands in any given situation? Temple displays an easy going optimism in proposing that man is capable of willing the right.

Temple's earlier sanction of Bradley's "infallible intuition" would now seem to be reversed in his misgivings about conscience as a safe guide: "Conscience, which we here understand as the spontaneous verdict of man's moral nature, is not by any means a completely reliable guide to life. It may be the best that we have got at any given moment, and we must act by it, but always with readiness to revise its judgments."[2]

In addition to his emphasis on the role of reason, Temple also gives a religious dimension to the problem of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 178-179.

[2] Ibid., p. 179.

Ethics which is there more by implication in his earlier works. "For the problems of Ethics arise out of the relation of finite spirits to each other, but can only be rightly determined by reference to the relation of those finite spirits to the Infinite Spirit."[1]

Temple goes on to say that the crucial problem of ethics is not so much what a man does as what a man is. It is character that gives birth to deeds. Man is moral because there is an absolute obligation upon him to "will the right." Temple saw that much of the content of this obligation came from a man's social context but this could hardly explain why a man might reject the demands of his society. "It is hard on that hypothesis to understand why the most imperative demands of conscience are demands that the individual should defy his social context. Luther's declaration before the Diet of Worms has not the appearance of an overwhelming impulse to conform to social context."[2]

This awareness of "absolute value" is for Temple a profoundly religious experience and he is convinced that no human being can escape it. "Therefore to be conscious of absolute Value is already to be in some form of intercourse with God; and this form of intercourse with God comes to

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[1] Ibid., p. 172.

[2] Ibid., p. 169.

every human being."[1] This assumption apparently makes fellowship with God a natural by-product of our humanity.

Temple has two other significant things to say about religious experience: "First, it is emphatic in its witness that God genuinely cares what men do. Secondly, religious experience is emphatic in its witness to a positive activity of God in history."[2] Does God care what we do only in relation to other men or does God care what we think and do about ourselves?

In keeping with his religious interpretation of morality, Temple now denies some of his earlier beliefs. His new emphasis is on Vocation. "The outstanding problem of Ethics is to be sought in terms neither of Utilitarianism however ideal, nor of Intuitionism, but of Vocation."[3]

In the first part of these lectures Temple made an appeal to reason for the final resolution of ethical problems.[4] It would be interesting to see how he might give a "reasonable" interpretation to Vocation. He in fact denies this possibility by saying that vocation is not a task for the philosopher but for the pastor: "Inasmuch as vocation is of its very nature individual, and to each

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[1] Christus Veritas, p. 95.

[2] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

[3] Nature, Man and God, p. 407.

[4] Ibid., pp. 175-176.

individual his own vocation is peculiar, the guiding of men towards the discovery of their vocation is a task for the evangelist and pastor rather than for the philosopher."[1]

Temple insists that the whole world process is grounded in the "Will of creative Deity, so that this divine Will is at once the source of world-order, and also the determinant for every finite mind of its special place within that order."[2] This approach to vocation is a reversal of Temple's previous point that morals are social in origin. Society is in reality transcended by a "creative Will" which is the ultimate source of morality.

His insight into the "individual" character of vocation would give the appearance of denying his former thesis that individuals cannot be moral or immoral outside social relationships. Surely Robinson Crusoe can have a sense of vocation which makes him a morally responsible person toward himself and his non-human environment.

Can we briefly summarize, without misrepresenting him, what Temple has said about morality and ethics:

1. Moral obligations have their origin in social relationships.

2. Ethical decisions are made by intuition (F. H. Bradley).

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[1] Ibid., p. 407.

[2] Ibid., p. 406.

3. The only moral absolute is a good will (Kant).

4. Two tests of morality are reason and the experience of the race.

5. The sense of moral obligation is a religious experience.

6. The solution to ethical problems must be sought in terms of vocation.

7. Vocation is determined by the Will of creative Deity.

IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

In viewing any man's writings we never know how far we can go in reading between the lines. Underlying assumptions are often unrecognizable. Logic gives us no sure guide to the sequence of a man's thought. We are always in the precarious position of making judgments about unstated presuppositions or (in)articulated conclusions. When dealing in the realm of ideas it is far more difficult to gather facts than when dealing with purely objective data. In our treatment of thought patterns it is immensely more difficult to avoid general impressions which are in some degree a reflection of one's own thought. Nothing is more dangerous in this process than to commit someone to a "school of thought" and to use that as a sure basis of interpretation. For example, one is tempted to suggest that Temple was strongly influenced by the "Oxford Idealists" during the early period of his life or he represents "Protestant Liberalism" in another area of his thought.[1] This method may help to catagorize or castigate another man's views but it is usually an over-simplification of the complex workings of the human mind. Most men see themselves as a unique combination of the best that can be distilled from others.

The foregoing prelude is especially needed as one approaches Temple's views on the Kingdom of God. So much theological discussion has raged over this issue that it

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[1] Horton, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

is difficult for us to permit anyone to stand on neutral ground. Temple, however, is consistently the "man in the middle."

So much of Temple's theology has its origin in philosophy but in his lectures at Cambridge in 1912 on The Kingdom of God he begins with the Bible:

> Now these are the two conceptions--the Kingdom to be founded by political and if necessary by military means; and the Kingdom to be founded by the Son of Man descending in the clouds of heaven and established by miracle. ...There is the one, strongly ethical, which insists that what is required of man above all things is obedience to duty and the moral law, and that only when he has made himself fit will God act; and there is the other which seems the direct contrast of that which insists that, if left alone, man cannot make himself fit, that this too, must be the work of God, and that what we have to do is simply to wait for Him.[1]

Temple saw the combination of these two views in John the Baptist. His proclamation, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," combines the prophetic emphasis on man's need to change his ways and the apocalyptic insight that God is about to act.

It is Jesus Christ who announces and inaugurates the Kingdom of God:

> If the Messiah is the Founder of the Kingdom of God, He is the Founder of the Kingdom of the Omnipotent. If God is to be omnipotent He must be ruler, not only of

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[1]William Temple, The Kingdom of God, (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 19-20.

> men's conduct, but also of their hearts and wills; and while the heart and will cannot be compelled, they can be won. Only by winning them can they be governed. It is by winning them through the manifestation of His love in sacrifice that Christ vindicates His claim to the Messiahship.[1]

What originally distressed and finally awakened the disciples was the totally unexpected death of the King. Here was an element in the establishment of the Kingdom they had not fully anticipated. They failed to comprehend that the Kingdom of God had to be understood within the context of methods appropriate to love.

The Kingdom of God has not only a King but also a community. "The word is meaningless unless it includes the idea of a community and society. So the individual cannot say that he is called upon only to conform his own life to the principles of Christ."[2] If, as Temple saw it, the Kingdom is the establishment of God's rule over the lives of men, then "a Christianity which is indifferent to moral issues, which is indifferent to those great permanent moral facts which we call the institutions of society, is a defective Christianity."[3]

For Temple, the Kingdom of God did have historic possibilities. "The extension of the Kingdom throughout the world is the primary demand made by Christ of the members

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[1] Ibid., p. 38.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Ibid., p. 40.

of His Kingdom."[1] We do not sit back and wait for God to establish His Kingdom. Temple suggests that God has already established His Kingdom in the most powerful way He could and the church has a missionary obligation to proclaim it to the ends of the earth. "But that secular environment is not yet Christian, and until it is, there is not the remotest chance of any individual person being completely Christian."[2] This is not an other-worldly hope. The Kingdom is directed toward men's life in the here and now. Men actually share in this enterprize of extending the Kingdom.

Temple saw the seriousness with which Christians accept history as closely akin to the Marxist view.

> It is a question of vital importance whether history makes any fundamental difference to our understanding of reality. ...For Christians the decisive meaning of history is given in Christ. ...The Christian understanding of history has much closer affinities with the Marxist view, in which all assertions about the nature of man are inseparably bound up with the dynamics of his historical existence, and with other dynamic views of history, which understand the world in terms of conflict, decision and fate, and regard history as belonging to the essence of existence, than with interpretations of Christianity in terms of idealistic thought which were lately prevalent.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 70.

[2] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[3] William Temple, What Christians Stand for in the Secular World, (London: SCM Press, 1944), p. 15.

Temple's realism prevented him from making the false assumption that moral progress was an inevitable concomitant of the historic process. Progress, however, is both possible and real.

> Evil in the general sense of opposition to Good, may never perish; but every special form of evil perishes and the Progress is not illusory but real.[1]

One of the objectives of the Kingdom is the perfecting of the social order. Temple is never guilty of assuming that moral progress is inevitable or that society is getting better "every day in every way." He does not apply the principles of biological evolution to the process of man's moral struggle. He does see the possibility of improvement and the Christian hope and challenge is to strive for the betterment of man's life within history:

> We are to look forward to a time when all men of all nations will be linked together in the pursuit of a common purpose, and that the purpose of Christ, so completely that all mankind will be a single moral personality, 'one perfect man.' That will be 'the measure of the stature of the completeness of the Christ.' Meanwhile what members there are must hold fast by the head, submitting themselves to its directions both in their influence exerted upon the civilization which has already accepted Christ in name and in the work of extending His Kingdom and building up His Body.[2]

Temple goes so far as to suggest some of the economic and political implications of the Kingdom:

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[1] Mens Creatrix, p. 273.

[2] Mens Creatrix, p. 333.

> In the first place, the economic structure of the kingdom will be one which will insist upon the responsibility of the individual to the community and the responsibility of the community for the individual; in fact, it will inevitably, so far as I can see, be what, at any rate fifty years ago, would have passed as 'Socialistic.' Whether the wisdom of man is equal to the government of such a society is altogether another question.
>
> Secondly, what will be the principle of its criminal administration? The good man will not be given to taking care that the bad man is punished, but he will convert the bad man by consenting to suffer at his hands.
>
> I pass on to international relationships. The Christian nation will, I think be prepared to defend by force others who are being oppressed; but, so far as its own interest is concerned, it will choose rather to perish than to stain its soul by the passion of war.[1]

For Temple, the Kingdom of God is, among other things, a perfected social order. It is an ideal which is always in the process of actualization. The Kingdom is not an unattainable utopia but is of the very essence of historical reality. It is the inevitable goal of creation. "It is very bad theology to suggest that the Mind of Christ conceives only what is utopian; the conception of anything in the Mind of Christ is the reality of that thing."[2]

In Christus Veritas Temple sets forth the principles which underlie the Kingdom:

> His kingdom consists in the establishment of His authority in men's lives by the surrender of their hearts

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[1] The Kingdom of God, pp. 79-82.

[2] Christus Veritas, p.204.

> and wills to the appeal of His love. ...So we naturally seek for principles in accordance with which we may order life so as to express the Mind of Christ.
>
> First and fundamental is that principle which in politics is called Liberty, but which is better represented by such a phrase as the Sacredness of Personality.
>
> Second is the Reality of Membership. The individual should exercise liberty in the spirit of membership or fellowship.
>
> The third principle which follows from these two is the Duty of Service. I fulfil my own destiny when I make my life an act of service.
>
> This leads us on to the fourth principle, which is the most distinctive of the Christian scheme--the Power of Sacrifice.
>
> It is thus, and by application of such unchanging principles as have been described to the changing conditions of successive generations, that we can bring eternity into history, and work, as we pray, for the coming of God's perfect sovereignty.[1]

Eighteen years later in Christianity and Social Order Temple reaffirms these principles: "Freedom, Fellowship, Service--these are the three principles of a Christian social order, derived from the still more fundamental Christian postulates that man is a child of God and is destined for a life of eternal fellowship with Him."[2] Sacrifice, "the most distinctively Christian" principle, is noticeably absent.

These principles are also reiterated again as part of his "Principles of Reconstruction" during World War II.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 202-206.

[2] William Temple, Christianity and Social Order, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942), p. 54.

> But men are not dutiful children of God. They are from birth self-centered, and remain so in lesser or greater degrees. They can be delivered from this evil state only by the active love (grace) of God calling out surrender and trust (faith). So far as this has not happened or has incompletely happened--(i.e. universally)--they need to be restrained in their self-interest to respect justice in their mutual dealings.[1]

The war did not shake Temple from his basic principles (Freedom, Fellowship and Service) but it did give him a deeper understanding of man's capacity to sin. In addition, he saw more profoundly the means of deliverance in theological terms. Man's unaided abilities would not be enough. Only God's grace could save him. In addition, man's tendency to abuse his freedom and fellowship forced Temple into suggesting that we would have to make an appeal to his self-interest. He hoped an enlightened self-interest would lead men into justice.

The Kingdom of God makes demands upon men in all the facets of his earthly existence but he cannot take one segment of life and exhaust the full meaning of the Kingdom. There is a transcendent element in the Kingdom which makes it an impossible achievement within history. "The full life (of the Kingdom) cannot be known under earthly conditions, for it is a fellowship of the servants of God in all generations alike with Him and with one another."[2]

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[1]William Temple, The Hope of a New World, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1940), p. 92.

[2]Christianity and Social Order, p. 41.

The Kingdom makes its demands upon personal spiritual growth and on our life in society. The Christian has to ask himself, what is the demand of the Kingdom of Love upon me at this moment and in these circumstances. "It is axiomatic that Love should be the predominant Christian impulse, and that the primary form of Love in social organization is Justice."[1] Love in this sense becomes an excessively inclusive term. When speaking of "Love as the predominant Christian impulse," Temple is referring to an intensely personal quality. Surely Love is descriptive of intelligent, personalized goodwill and cannot be applied to the impersonal relations which characterize "social organization." Would Love in Social organization go beyond Justice? Can Justice be as generous as Love? Love is such an all-embracing concept that Temple applies it to whatever in any situation is the "good" or the "right" thing.

The primary form of Love in social organization is Justice and yet for Temple the man in politics must make his appeal to our self-interest. "A statesman who supposes that a mass of citizens can be governed without appeal to their self-interest is living in a dreamland and is a public menace. The art of Government in fact is the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands."[1] It is obviously not easy to appeal to "self-interest" and remain true to the principles of Service, Sacrifice, Love or Justice. What kind of service is it that

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[1] Ibid., p. 42.

is based on self-interest? Temple's political realism is a surprising contrast to his Christian idealism. For the Christian the "primary form of Love in social organization is justice" but for the politician his appeal is to "self-interest." Temple evidently recognizes the impossibility of applying love to some forms of social organization.

There is a realism apparent again in Temple's insistence upon the necessity of compromise:

> I would suggest then that compromise of a certain kind with the standards of the society we live in is not only inevitable, but right. ...Our duty, then, seems to be something like this: we must compromise with the world on those points where we may be assisting the development of what is best in the actual circumstances of the society in which we live. We may unite with the higher elements of the business world in order to assist the further development of commercial morality. We may not, of course, unite with its lower elements. It is impossible to use absolute terms.[1]

The Christian should never try to be independent of his circumstances. If he must compromise, it should always be with the highest or best elements he can discover in the situation; nor is this compromising position one in which the Christian can be content. Temple was convinced that moral progress could only be made a step at a time and it was far more appropriately Christian to compromise temporarily and gradually improve the situation than to do nothing at all.

Temple summed up his own views in the following phrase: "The aim of a Christian social order is the fullest possible

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[1] The Kingdom of God, pp. 92-95.

development of individual personality in the widest and deepest possible fellowship."[1] No one sentence can cover the scope of Temple's thought. He frequently grasped the complexity and difficulty of morality in social life and tried to be specific in his proposals for improving it. Temple was a realist in that he not only proclaimed the principles but went on to suggest the ways in which life could be brought into conformity with them.

Temple's idealism is exposed in his concern for principles and the final goal of ethical behavior. He tries to overcome a sharp distinction between the ideal and the real. A thoroughgoing idealist could be a dreamer or a cynic; Temple was neither. Ethical goals were possible, principles could be formulated and, above all, men could work for the improvement of themselves and society for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Temple never dogmatically insisted that his views were the Christian solution. Many of his practical suggestions were to be accepted as his own and in no sense were they to officially represent the views of the Church:

> Let no one quote this as my conception of the political programme which Christians ought to support. There neither is nor can be any such programme. I do offer it as a Christian social programme, in the sense of being one which seeks to embody Christian principles; but there is no suggestion that if you are a Christian you ought to think these steps wise or expedient.[2]

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[1] Christianity and Social Order, p. 74.

[2] Ibid., p. 90.

In this area of the Kingdom of God and Social Order, Temple had more to say than on any other subject. This interest was obviously the overriding burden of his life. Few men have written as much or worked as hard to influence the Church and the Christian in the direction of moral responsibility for the social order. Temple was not a detached or disinterested spectator of man's social struggle. He was prepared to think, love and fight for the right as he saw it and undoubtedly inspired a good many other Christians to do the same.

Perhaps his views can be fairly summed up in the following way:

1. The nature of the Kingdom of God has already been demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

2. History cannot be ignored but must be taken seriously.

3. The Kingdom of God demands the perfecting of the social order.

4. History (earthly conditions) cannot exhaust the possibilities of the Kingdom.

5. Moral progress is not inevitable but it is possible.

6. The claims of the Kingdom are relative to man's predicament and compromise is unavoidable.

7. The Church must define and clarify the principles of social morality and every Christian must develop his own practical methods of achieving them.

V. THE CHRISTIAN AND WAR

For all practical purposes Temple's career began and ended with the two World Wars of this century. In 1914 he was Rector of S. James's, London, his one and only charge, as a parish minister. Temple died as Archbishop of Canterbury, before the conclusion of World War II, in 1944. Throughout his ministry he wrestled with the problem of war and the grounds on which a Christian could participate in it.

As we have noticed earlier, Temple rejected the possibility of adhering to absolutes in making moral decisions. Each set of historic circumstances had its peculiar elements which had to be fully considered. Temple was persistently plagued by the problem of the extent to which a Christian could use force or engage in killing as a part of warfare. Coupled with this was the whole question of loyalty to the State.

Temple was unequivocal in his support of Britain's entrance into World War I. "This nation was right to declare war and those who are fighting at her call are fighting for a just cause, which there was at that time, no way of serving except the soldiers way."[1]

Temple agreed with the critics who said that the war was a result of the failure of Christianity. His grounds for thinking so were not the same. He saw the break down as a

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[1]William Temple, Papers for War Time, (London: Oxford Press, 1914), p. 3.

consequence of the fact that Christianity had never really been tried. In a sense, the war had helped to advance the Christian cause because men saw more clearly the necessity of it. "Indeed, it is not Christianity that has broken down, for Christianity has never been applied to international relations. What has broken down is a civilization which was not Christian."[1]

After Temple rejected the alternatives to war, in this particular instance, he proceeded to describe the way in which a Christian should act when participating in it:

(1) Love your enemies.
(2) Let nothing except proven truth be told against our enemies.
(3) The Christian must never desire to take reprisals.
(4) In everything that he does the Christian will be penitent for his own share in the evil.
(5) Above all, the Christian will pray for his enemies.[2]

In 1931 he said some things about the nature of war which supported these earlier principles, especially in regard to telling the truth. Death and destruction, bad as they were, could not be considered the worst of evils.

> Let us not forget that war as an accepted method of settling disputes exerts a continuous moral influence. Its worst evils are not the slaughter in battles, the deaths from disease, the economic dislocation. Still more destructive of the right relationship among men

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[1] Ibid., p. 4.

[2] Ibid., pp. 8-10.

> are the distrust and suspicion, the deceit and prevarication, which characterise the mutual relations of nations between which war is regarded as even possible.[1]

Lying does undoubtedly disrupt inter-personal and inter-group relations but killing completely destroys the relationship and the possibility of redeeming it. Surely it is open to question whether it is worse to be involved in falsehood and deceit with your neighbor or to kill him. A distrust that results in killing must certainly be the worst of evils. We do not justifiably fight wars against those who lie, but rather against those who kill.

This same point that war is not the worst of evils is reiterated again during World War II when Temple said:

> We think that some evils are still worse than war, and also that the only way in practice to abolish war is to be ready to fight for the establishment and maintenance of international law. ...But if loss of life is not the greatest injury to suffer, it cannot be the greatest to inflict. To enslave the mind and spirit is a greater injury than to kill the body.[2]

In spite of Temple's approval of Britain's entry into World War I, he did not sanction war as a legitimate method of settling international disputes and thought the main thrust of the Christian influence ought to be in the direction of creating a climate in which war was impossible.

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[1]William Temple, Thoughts on Problems of the Day, (London: Macmillan, 1931), p. 38.

[2]William Temple, Thoughts in War Time, (London: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 31-32.

> I mention that here lest anyone should suppose that in saying that war as an accepted method of settling disputes is contrary to the mind of Christ, I am saying that under no circumstances ought a nation to declare war, or a Christian to fight. What I am saying is that the situation in which it is a duty to fight ought never to arise, and that it is our bounden duty to establish other means for settling international disputes, and in our own disputes to make use of them.[1]

In a previous section we accused Temple of making too clear a distinction between good and evil. On the issues of war, however, Temple saw that even the "right" thing to do was still the lesser of two evils. No matter how high the motive or how worthy and just the cause, war was sinful.

> A sinful man <u>cannot</u> live the life of Christ; a sinful nation <u>cannot</u> perfectly obey His law; and the citizen of a sinful nation <u>cannot</u> escape altogether from his nation's sin. ...For it is the hideous result of sin that it brings us into a choice where even the rightest thing that we can do is something evil. And though we are right, and absolutely right, in choosing the lesser evil, it is still evil, for it is still not perfect obedience to the holy will of God.[2]

In a discussion of this problem just prior to World War I (1912), Temple was inclined to think that a person's refusal to fight would encourage the worst forms of evil. In adherence to lofty Christian principles, we might think we were serving the highest good when, in fact, we were supporting the worst cause of all.

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[1] <u>Thoughts on Problems of the Day</u>, pp. 36-37.

[2] <u>Papers for War Time</u>, p. 13.

> Perhaps the noblest character of all is the one that would refuse to fight; but the man who is ready to give up his own life for the sake of his country's gain, or in obedience to his country's command is clearly a better man than one who shirks fighting on the grounds of self-interest, and there is a serious danger that a man by attempting to force the highest will, as a matter of fact, only encourage the lowest.[1]

Before the Christian participates in war he must determine the measure of justice in the cause for which he fights. As Temple saw it, the pacifist problem was one of how the demands of love could be related to the need for justice in inter-group relations.

> One form in which the pacifist problem presents itself is a special variant of the question how love is related to justice. We usually emphasise the truth that love transcends justice; this is a point of vital importance in the relations of individuals to one another. But it is at least arguable that love also presupposes justice; and if that is so, it may be the more relevant consideration in the relations to one another of groups or bodies corporate.[2]

Justice, however, was not to be the final goal in international relations. In the first stages of justice, a group will defend its own interests. The next step which leads beyond justice is the recognition of claims based on common interests. Temple was a realist in his insistence that the higher goal of love, where the interests of the other party are also considered, could not be achieved unless the elementary demands of justice were first met.[3]

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[1] The Kingdom of God, p. 91.

[2] Thoughts in War Time, p. 15.

[3] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Temple was quite sure that fighting or killing, as isolated events, were not appropriate expressions of love. The Christian must ask in every situation, "What action does love require?"

> Now if we isolate a particular moment it is clear that to shoot a fellow man or to institute a blockade of a nation is not a direct expression of any sort of love. But the question is not simply: How can we show love to Germans? The question is: How can we show love to Frenchmen, Poles, Czechs, and Germans all at once. ...In the world which exists, it is not possible to take as self-evident that the law of love forbids fighting. Some of us even hold that precisely that law commands fighting.[1]

Temple goes on to make a distinction between killing and murder. He illustrates the circumstances in which killing is justified:

> Murder is always wrong; because murder is the taking of another man's life for personal and selfish ends. To kill a man, if that is the only alternative to being killed by him, is not murder; it is usually classed as justifiable homicide. Even if it is arguable that a perfect Christian would allow himself to be killed rather than kill his would-be murderer in self-defence, it is not arguable that he should allow a human brute to kill a child rather than kill the brute himself. Of course, he should stop him without taking his life if that is possible; but if it is not possible, he is not at liberty, he is under obligation to kill; and that obligation is rooted in love.[2]

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[1] William Temple, A Conditional Justification of War, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), pp. 9-10.

[2] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

One might accept the validity of killing when it is possible to deal with the offender, but what about modern warfare with its massive indiscriminate killing? Temple tried to answer that problem by saying: "Certainly to cause suffering to the innocent is an evil; whether or not it is wrong to bring that evil into the world depends on the nature of the evils which may be checked as a result."[1]

Self-interest was never a valid basis for a Christian nation to engage in war. As we noted earlier, Temple was also concerned that the individual Christian should not refuse to fight on "the ground of self-interest."

> A thoroughly Christian nation, I believe, would refuse to fight even in self-defence if only its own interest were at stake; but I do not think it follows at all that the Christian citizen of a state which has not yet reached that pitch should refuse to fight, because if he does he may be putting himself entirely out of touch with the great stream of life which at the moment, may be a far nobler thing than any practicable alternative.[2]

Temple was also convinced that the State was subject to moral obligation. A refusal to fight would not only tolerate but would encourage moral irresponsibility at the national level.

> How far is the nation a moral agent? We are concerned in this war to resist and, as we hope, eliminate from Europe as a principle of action the claim of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] The Kingdom of God, p. 91.

> national State to be exempt from all moral obligations in its dealing with other States. In other words, we are fighting for the principle of national morality.[1]

Temple thought that a Christian could not isolate himself from the demands of the State. He rejected the idea that a Christian could discount the demands of "national morality" because of his own personal ideals.

> So our question about national morality becomes the question whether the individual acting in the context of his citizenship is bound by the same ethical principles and standards as he is when he acts apart from that context. ...A Man's duties are always liable to be modified by his social context.[2]

> The question is not -- Shall I do my duty as a Christian or my duty as a citizen? The question is, What is my duty as a Christian citizen? or, How can I best express loyalty to Christ when acting in my civic capacity?[3]

The moral conflict in our role as "Christian" as over against "citizen" is resolved in the possibility of their combination. Temple has overcome the tension through what could be an "unholy alliance." Later he appears to reconcile the issue by retreating from his "Christian duties" and accepting the primary responsibility of his "citizenship."

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[1] Thoughts in War Time, p. 20.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

> Last week I argued that circumstances may arise in which it is right for a Christian to kill his fellowmen. But of course, it is not enough because he is a Christian that he has this duty; if he has it, it is a duty arising from his citizenship, which his Christianity does not alter or remove.[1]

Here he is not asking about his duty as a Christian citizen but only about his responsibility as a citizen. What if he had been a German citizen under Hitler. Would not his Christianity alter his duty? Does not the Christian always have to ask whether or not his killing is serving the highest possible good? In another work during this same period, Temple appears to reverse himself. First, he combined "Christian" and "citizenship." Then he separated them as though each category could make its own demands. Now he is suggesting that in the last analysis priority must be given to "conscience" and "spiritual integrity." "The State may not claim the subservience of his conscience or demand that he act contrary to it. His spiritual integrity and his fellowship with God take precedence of his citizenship."[2]

Temple recognized the difficulty of participation in war and at the same time adhering to high principles. He knew that a war based on hatred would bring out the worst in man. Both the individual and his nation must guard against any corruption from the temporarily drastic measures which have to be taken in order to achieve a higher good.

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[1] Ibid., p. 36.

[2] William Temple, Citizen and Churchman, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1941), p. 31.

"Only if we are determined to see that our victory really does serve justice and freedom; only if we are determined in our national life to promote justice and freedom where now they are imperfectly attained; only on these conditions dare we come forward as their champions in war."[1]

Here is a brief summary of Temple's views on the problems of war as he consistently struggled with it over a period of thirty years:

1. The problem of war, like all other ethical decisions, is relative to historic circumstances.

2. Wars are the result of man's failure to put Christian principles into practice.

3. Participation in war may be the lesser of two evils. Non-participation may advance the worst of evils.

4. Killing is not the worst of evils. Slavery of the mind and spirit; falsehood and distrust are worse.

5. Murder is taking another life for personal or selfish reasons. Killing is justified if it is the only alternative in the achievement of the highest possible good.

6. War, as the result of man's sin, forces us into a situation where even the best thing we can do is evil.

7. Within the larger framework of sin, participation in war is absolutely right.

8. Christians or nations should never refuse to fight on the grounds of self-interest. Nor should they enter or initiate a conflict on the same grounds.

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[1] A Conditional Justification of War, p. 29.

9. Love demands justice in social relations. War may be necessary to the creation of a climate in which justice is possible.

10. The State is a morally responsible institution.

11. The Christian cannot escape his responsibility as a citizen. The State, however, cannot violate his conscience or spiritual integrity.

12. Christians are always under obligation to defend the principles of freedom and justice.

VI. PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

A. POLITICS

In a volume containing a number of documents which came out of the Oxford Conference (1937) on "The Church, Community and State," Temple contributed an article in which he outlined the guiding principles of conduct for the Christian who served in public life:

> (1) The Christian is bound to apply the standards of his religion to every department of his conduct. (2) In so doing this, he is bound to consider the probable effects of any course of action, and choose that which in its consequences is likely to promote the greatest conformity to those standards. (3) He has the obligation because he is called to live, not by the letter of any law or precept, but by a Spirit. (4) In considering the effects of his action he must take the widest possible survey and not limit his attention to those most immediately concerned on any occasion; and especially he must consider his special responsibilities, e.g., as politician or as man of business, or Labour leader, the discharge of which is for him a primary obligation. (5) Having settled his course by these principles, he must be ready to incur personal sacrifice, and to call others voluntarily to join him in sacrifice, as he follows the course chosen.[1]

An underlying assumption was that Christianity does have standards which can be applied to all human activity. Temple was realistic, however, in recognizing the fact that human beings could not always fully live up to them. He saw the difficulty of adhering to high Christian principles

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[1] William Temple, Christian Faith and the Common Life, (London: Geo. Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 64.

but tended to minimize the problem of discovering what the principles were in the first place. For Temple they appeared to be self-evident.

Temple conceded the impossibility of achieving perfection. A Christian is always under the necessity of doing his best in any given set of circumstances. Christians who entered political life would have to compromise a good many of their ideals. Temple thought it was perfectly right for them to do so.

> Suppose a man feels convinced that he can do a great deal of good for the country as a party politician, and yet knows that, in order to be effective as a member of either party, he will have to put in his pocket a certain number of convictions, at any rate for a time: well, it seems to me quite clear that it is his duty to do it. ...In one sense he is not rigidly honest. ...But it is the only way in which politics, when you have got a party system, or, as far as I can see, any other system, can be conducted.[1]

Evidently honesty is not one of the principles which a Christian can apply to his political life, as stated in Temple's principles above.

Being a politician placed certain "primary obligations" (principle 4 above) in a position of unavoidable priority. Temple acknowledged the compelling character of the State's demands, but would not allow them to be considered as ultimate. "The first effect of connecting our political thought with our faith in God is to destroy the ultimate

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[1]William Temple, The Kingdom of God, pp. 88-89.

or absolute character which has so often been attributed to the State."[1] It is surely not an easy distinction to make between what is "primary" and what is "ultimate."

Two fundamental principles which Temple derived from the Christian Gospel were Sanctity of Personality and the Fact of Fellowship. He saw in these two principles a combination of the two general types of political theory. One was based on the method of Aristotle who acknowledged man by nature as a social creature, and Government was a natural consequence of that fact. The other theory rejected society as an ultimate fact of human nature. Individuality is the most basic feature. A society is formed by individuals entering into a "social contract." Temple accepted both theories: "By God's appointment we are free spirits; by His appointment also we are 'members one of another.' The whole problem of politics, the whole art of statesmanship is to do full justice to both those principles without sacrifice of either in the varying circumstances of successive ages."[2]

The problems which arise in the conflict of personal and group morality were fully appreciated and Temple's understanding of the issue is a further indication of his political realism.

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[1] William Temple, Christianity and the State, (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 27.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

> Those who wish to protest against some action of the State often employ the maxim: What is morally wrong cannot be politically right. This is true if it means that it cannot be politically right for the State to do what is morally wrong for the State to do. But that is not usually what is meant. This maxim is usually intended, by those who make use of it, to declare that it cannot be right for the State to do what it would be wrong for an individual to do; and this is completely untrue. It shows a complete misunderstanding of the ethical problem to suppose that certain acts are right and certain other acts are wrong quite irrespective of the agent who does them and of the circumstances in which they are done. If that were the state of affairs, ethics would be a very much simpler science than it is.[1]

As a definition of the State, Temple accepted with slight modifications that given by R. M. MacIver in The Modern State: "The State is a necessary organ of the national community, maintaining through Law as promulgated by a government endowed to this end with coercive power the universal external conditions of social power."[2] The distinguishing mark of the State was not its possession of coercive power but the self-expression of a national community through Law. Force was only to be used as a means to preserve justice and social order.

With regard to the State and Law, Temple saw the State as supreme: "Again, it is perfectly true that the State, as fountain and guarantor of Law, has no political superior.

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[1] Ibid., p. 153.

[2] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

No legal limits can be set to its authority."[1] This apparent supremacy of the State is not easily reconciled with an earlier statement of Temple's on the present need for international order: "Nationalism has been the great feature of the last three centuries; consequently State absolutism became the dominant political philosophy. Now life is becoming increasingly international."[2] He went on to suggest that "community is become very largely international; therefore the State must become international also."[3] If the community expressed in the State was becoming international in character, then so must the political organs of the new world community find expression in a "State" with international law and order. Temple's concept of the State evidently transcended nationalistic boundaries.

The State is a custodian of "social power." For Temple, the most important ingredient of power was responsibility. To guarantee the proper use of power, he suggested that it be given responsibility and this would direct it into avenues of service. He seriously underestimates the inherent tendency of power to corrupt and reveals a naive view of its conversion. "One great moral truth is that power involves responsibility. Therefore, wherever there is power responsibility should be formally bestowed; then even associations

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[1] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

[2] Ibid., p. 121.

[3] Ibid., p. 171.

which have been formed for selfish purposes, if they obtain actual power, will be converted into agencies of service."[1] One could only wish that irresponsible people with power were as easily changed.

Not only in international relations but also the individual through his faith in God denied the absolute authority of the State. In addition, the State itself must recognize the final authority of God. "The doctrine of State-absolutism, at any rate, cannot be Christian, for it ignores or defies the sole absolute sovereignty of God."[2] Temple saw that a State without God tended to become absolute. The State has a legitimate claim upon my property and my body, "but upon my character it has no claim. That belongs first and foremost to God."[3]

What about the role of the Church and the State? Temple saw that they both functioned in the same sphere--the life of man. Their functions were related to man's social life but their particular roles were fundamentally quite different:

(1) The State stands for justice, the Church for love;

(2) For the State the material basis of life is primary, for the Church the spiritual source and goal of life is primary;

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[1] Ibid., p. 138.

[2] Ibid., p. 173.

[3] Ibid., p. 176.

(3) The State is particular, the Church universal;
(4) The State is the organ of a natural community or of an association; the Church is called to be a fellowship of the Spirit.[1]

Temple would not want these contrasts pushed too far. Any isolation of Christianity from political concerns was an inadequate view of Christianity. "But just because of its concern with individual character, the Church is vitally concerned with the conditions that affect character."[2] Christianity is interested in the "whole man" and the Church has an interest in anything which affects human well-being. The Church cannot be indifferent to housing, education and working conditions because of their obvious effects on character. "When we look closely we soon see that no firm line can be drawn marking off those sides of public life and its ordering which properly concern the Church from those which do not."[3] The Church is legitimately concerned with everything which the State does but it also has concerns which go beyond those of the State.

It is interesting to note that for Temple the Church extends its influence not through social or political pressure in proposing concrete measures of reform but it

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[1]William Temple, Citizen and Churchman, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1941), p. 66.

[2]William Temple, Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1927), pp. 19-20.

[3]Ibid., p. 20.

contributes to social progress through the inspiration it can bring to bear on the individual lives of Christian men and women:

> The Church is both entitled and obliged to condemn the society characterised by these evils; but it is not entitled in its corporate capacity to advocate specific remedies.
>
> On the other hand, the very object of condemning the evil is to stimulate those who respect its authority to seek and apply the remedy. For the larger proportion of the Church's contribution to social progress is made in this way. It inspires its members with a faith in the power of which they, acting as politicians, civil servants, business men, trade unionists, or whatever they may be, modify the customs and traditions of the department of state or section of society with which they are concerned.
>
> In other words the Church lays down principles; the Christian citizen applies them; and to do this he utilises the machinery of the State.[1]

Like most of Temple's principles, this is not to be carried to an extreme. He did not for one moment mean to imply that the concern of the Church was limited to the individual. He recognised and appreciated the basically social character of Christianity as it first appeared in primitive society. In his concern for the social welfare of men, Temple saw the role of the Church as a critic of social institutions in their specific violations of Christian principles. The Church appears to be free to criticize but she is not at liberty to offer any precisely practical solutions to social problems. Temple never resolves this

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[1] Citizen and Churchman, p. 73.

dilemma: the church may point out specific evils but it is not her business to spell out the constructive steps that must be taken to overcome them. The Church must point men to the principles. "The Church is committed to the everlasting Gospel and to the Creeds which formulate it; it must never commit itself to an ephemeral programme of detailed action."[1]

It is easier to criticize the particular violations of a principle than to show how the principle may be preserved in some other course of action. Temple conceded the right and duty of individual Christians to make their specific proposals for social reform, but in spite of his awareness of the social nature of the Church, he could not see it initiating plans or programs of social action. "It must criticise actual institutions in the light of its own social principles, because it aims, not at the salvation of individuals one by one, but at that perfect individual and social welfare which is called the Kingdom of God or the Holy City."[2]

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[1] Christianity and Social Order, p. 19.

[2] Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, p. 24.

B. ECONOMICS

As early as 1912, in The Kingdom of God, Temple grappled with the problem of the Christian in the business world. It was quite in order for the Christian to go into business and if need be to compromise his Christian principles. The problem for the Christian was to discover a principle which distinguished "permissible compromise from that which is absolutely prohibited."[1] He illustrated it by showing that a Christian might have to accept competition, if that were the basic mode of business organization, but under no conditions could the Christian engage in dishonesty. (He could in politics but not in economics.) The desired principle was then stated: "We must compromise with the world on those points where we may be assisting the development of what is best in the actual circumstances of the society in which we live. We may unite with the higher elements of the business world in order to assist the further development of commercial morality."[2]

At this point Temple did not elaborate on what he meant by "commercial morality." He did, however, register his objections to competition as an essential feature of

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[1] The Kingdom of God, p.92.

[2] Ibid., p. 95.

the business world.[1] It was by no means limited to business, but it had pervaded the whole of life. Competition, for Temple, was "organised selfishness"[2] and he vehemently rejected it as in any way compatible with Christian principles:

> A great deal has been said in praise of competition, and most of it is rubbish. It is said, for example, that you must not interfere with natural processes; you must let the cream come to the top. But the scum comes to the top quite as much as the cream. It is sometimes said that if you want to get the best out of a man you must appeal to his own interest. That brings us to the crucial point. For if that is true, Christ was wrong. The whole gospel rests upon the presupposition of the denial of that statement. If you want to get the best out of a man, you must appeal to his loyalty, his affection, his devotion, his perception of what his conduct involves for others whom he cares for or who care for him.[3]

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[1] It might be noted that Temple was undoubtedly influenced in his economic thought by his long-time friend R. H. Tawney, who inaugurated the Holland Memorial Lectures in 1922 with Religion and the Rise of Capitalism. Tawney's lectures substantiate, to some extent, the thesis of Max Weber in his book The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904). Tawney corrected Weber's thesis by suggesting that some of the elements of capitalism (individualism and competition) were older than the Reformation. They were as old as history. Temple concurs with Tawney's conclusion that competition is the basic characteristic of capitalist society.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

[3] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

Beneath all of the problems within industry itself, Temple saw the greatest ethical issues in the relation between Industry and the total Community and the responsibility Industry had to the individual who was more than just a "worker." Economics was never to be considered as an end in itself. "If economics is the science of the production and distribution of something, the end of whose being is the subject-matter of ethics and politics, it follows that economics must be regarded as subordinate to ethics and politics."[1]

Temple's concern for the community at large and the total welfare of the individual lead him to the Socialist position:

> There is therefore an absolute supremacy of the interest of the community, and of members of the community as such, over the interests of Industry. There can be no proper conflict between these, for the only true interests of industry are those which subserve the interest of the community. This fundamental principle is one of the roots of all forms of theoretical Socialism: and it itself is incontrovertible.[2]

The main objection to Socialism, as Temple saw it, was not that it misunderstood the relations between industry and the community but that no government was capable of wisely managing such a complicated system as would be the responsibility of the State. Temple agreed that if the right spirit

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[1] Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, p. 43.

[2] Ibid., p. 43.

prevailed in industry there would be no need of centralized control. But he did not feel that the right spirit was forthcoming.

> Individual capitalists or employers can show it, and call forth a similar response from their employees. It is very hard to see how the joint stock company, left to itself, can show it. If that is so, the case for a movement in the Collectivist direction seems to be proved, whether or not the whole journey is to be travelled to a complete Socialist State.[1]

Both the Labour Party and the Tory Party were socialistic in aim and action. "The important differences concern the conception of that general well-being to which by common consent industry should be subservient."[2]

Approximately thirteen years later Temple appears to be writing in a slightly different vein. After discussing an economic order in which the needs of the consumer ought to be the main interest he said:

> It is easy to infer from this that some form of Communism or State Socialism is the ideal system. But these ignore the fact that a man is still a human being in his activity as a producer and not only as a consumer; he ought to have free play for his personality, as far as may be, in the act of production -- and this is the root-truth of individualistic capitalism. Our task must be to do justice as far as possible to the truth of capitalism, as well as to the truth of socialism.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 44.

[3] William Temple, The Hope of a New World, (London: SCM Press, 1940), p. 52.

He went on to insist that the State, as representative of the whole community, should be responsible for the over-all planning of economic life. He conceded that some industries such as the Post Office were better run by the State. This kind of direct management, he believed, should be kept to a minimum. "For State management involved bureaucracy, and this easily becomes as stifling to free personality as grinding competition. We do not want one cast-iron system but the fullest attainable combination of order or planning with freedom of personal initiative."[1]

Temple was never an exponent of unlimited socialism. Even back in 1912 when he first suggested that the economic structure of the Kingdom of God would be "Socialistic" in character, he was not too specific as to its form but simply insisted upon it in principle. "Whether this will take the form of direct State ownership, or of State control of privately owned capital, is a matter which seems to me indifferent from the point of view of general principles; but the community will not allow that any great occupation of men can be something indifferent to it, which it can leave to run its own course."[2] There was a sense in which Temple's insistence on some form of socialism was always

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[1] Ibid., p. 52.

[2] The Kingdom of God, p. 79.

pointing to an ideal. "Whether the wisdom of man is equal to the government of such a society is altogether another question."[1]

Throughout his career Temple consistently proclaimed this principle: "The Christian State must insist that men are responsible to the whole community in which they live and it must have that responsibility expressed in its organisation and in the general governing conditions of their lives, which are for the most part economic; and it must also insist that the whole community and everybody in it is responsible in some degree for each individual."[2]

Religion, Politics and Economics must give due recognition to the purpose of God, "The development of persons in community."[3] The two extremes of individualism and collectivism were always to be avoided.

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

[2] Ibid., p. 80.

[3] William Temple, The Church Looks Forward, (London: Macmillan, 1944), p. 131

C. MARRIAGE

In spite of the ethical relativism and realism with which Temple approached most problems, when it came to his views on marriage and divorce he reflected the traditional position of his church. Here, as elsewhere, he had tried to avoid any involvement in legalism and he rejected the idea that Jesus was in any sense legalistic about this matter. As we shall see, Temple's adherence to the underlying principle borders on legalism.

There are decided limits as to how far the Church could go regardless of the sanctions permitted by the State. He did insist that Christians should not seek to impose their ideals upon non-Christians. Contrary to this apparent generosity, Temple believed that even the State should only permit divorce and re-marriage on the grounds of adultery: "That for this cause (adultery) the State should permit divorce and re-marriage is reasonable and even right; but it is best that this should be the only cause."[1]

A number of features are involved in Temple's treatment of this problem. Without an elaboration of the details, we do have a condensation of Temple's views as he expressed them:

> (a) Christ did not legislate concerning marriage and divorce, but here as elsewhere laid down the one true principle.
> (b) That principle is that sexual union rightly implies life-long union of persons.

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[1] Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, p. 119.

(c) The Church is mainly concerned to uphold the ideal by appeal to conscience. To this end it should refuse to pronounce its blessing on any union where a partner to a former union with one of the parties is still alive. It should not subject to any further spiritual censure or penalty the 'innocent party' to a divorce suit under the present law. It should so treat parties to a divorce who re-marry if the divorce was on any other ground than adultery. (The 'guilty' party should be regarded as ex ipso excommunicate for his 'guilt' nor for his re-marriage.)

(d) The State is concerned to maintain as high a standard as can be established under penalties. ...It should allow divorce with right of re-marriage for adultery, but for no other cause. If, however, other causes are allowed, the point to be chiefly considered is how far they make impossible, or any proposed concession will make less easy, that personal union of which the sexual union sanctioned by marriage is the expression and sacrament.[1]

Temple admits that his own view is one of several possible interpretations of the teaching of Jesus. He refused to believe that Christ was legislating on this issue any more than on any other teaching. "Everywhere He is concerned with the spirit rather than the action."[2]

If Temple is also more concerned about the "spirit," then it is strange that he should lay such stress on the act of adultery. "Moreover, adultery does strike at the heart of marriage as no other offence or circumstance can do."[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 119-120.

[2] Ibid., p. 109.

[3] Ibid., p. 119.

Temple did not seem to recognize the possibility that adultery might be the by-product of a more fundamental alienation of personalities which is more "spiritual" in character than physical. Temple tended to define marriage too exclusively in terms of sex. He apparently recognized that the physical aspects of marriage were prompted by something deeper: "First is affirmed the principle that physical union can only be right when it is prompted by a love so deep as to require life-long union."[1] Rather than to say that "sexual union implies a life-long union of persons," would not Temple have been nearer the truth to have said that a love which is ready to make an unconditional commitment to life-long union will find expression in sexual union.

Temple concedes that in the case of adultery it is permissible for the "innocent" party to leave the "guilty" partner. But neither has the right to re-marry while the other party is living. The State may legally permit it but the Church should not bless it. In the case of re-marriage, Temple did not go as far as the Roman Catholic Church where excommunication of those who re-marry is automatic.

> It may become psychologically necessary that the husband or wife should leave the unfaithful partner; but that cannot give liberty to marry another and the Church (as I hold) ought not to bless such a union, however completely it may have the sanction of the

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[1] Thoughts on Problems of the Day, p. 44.

> State. ...Consequently, though the Church should refuse to bless the union it should not excommunicate.[1]

Temple was quite willing for the State to have one set of regulations and the Church to have another standard. He strenuously objected to the Church having to sanction and carry out the laws of the State in this matter:

> For this reason I have for a considerable number of years held that we should gain rather than lose if the Church were to obtain release from obligation to do the State's business, and refused to solemnise the marriage of any who had not already been married in the eye of the law at the Registry Office, bestowing its blessing only on those who, as far as enquiry could disclose, mean by marriage what the Church means.[2]

It is quite true that for a number of years Temple had insisted that the Church and the State should have different marriage laws. It was not a case of adherence to different moralities but more precisely a matter of different functions. The Church points to an ideal while the State must cope with the more practical possibilities in any given situation.

> I see no reason why the Church should compromise on questions of marriage-law, or try to have the same marriage-law as the state; and I see great reason why they should try to have different ones. Here you have a perfectly clear case upon which legislation is possible. The reason for having different rules is not that the Church and the State are concerned to uphold different moralities, but that they discharge different functions in relation to one morality. The business of the State

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[1] Essays on Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, p. 115.

[2] Thoughts on Problems of the Day, pp. 48-49

> is surely to get the best possible results out of a given material so far as human foresight can anticipate the consequences of any action.[1] The business of the Church is to uphold an ideal.[1]

Temple says that the individual would occasionally have to compromise but insisted that the Church could never do so.[2] In referring to the pacifist position, Temple had said that "there is a serious danger that a man attempting to force the highest will, as a matter of fact, only encourage the lowest."[3] It is difficult to see why this same principle might not also apply to the Church in its uncompromising promotion of an ideal view of marriage.

Undoubtedly, Temple saw the difficulty of reconciling his rather definite views on marriage and divorce with the more generous side of his own nature. As in the case of war, he saw how one might have to compromise an ideal in order to achieve the highest possible good. In politics he conceded that one might have to "pocket his convictions."[4] So on this issue he was willing to yield theoretically to the peculiar situations which invariably arise:

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[1] The Kingdom of God, pp. 87-88.

[2] Ibid., p. 90.

[3] Ibid., p. 91.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

> The divorce as allowed by Moses may have been the best that could be made of a bad job. And there are bad jobs of which we must make the best we can, having regard at once to the only true ideal, to the effect of any particular action on the general standard accepted, and to the highest interests of the individuals concerned.[1]

For some reason or other, he did not spell out any of the particular circumstances in which an exception to the rules might be made. Consistently in his treatment of ethical problems Temple held that "exceptions to moral rules may be made when, and only when, the exceptional character of the occasion is so clear that breach of the rule will in no way suggest neglect of it."[2] How do you engage in a breach of the rule or violate a principle without neglecting it? On this issue Temple suggested that where a priest had any doubts about his duty he should refer the matter to his Bishop.[3]

What Temple most feared was a demoralization of the seriousness with which people would accept the marriage vows if one began to alter the rules for exceptional cases. "But there seems little reason to doubt that every modification of the rule that marriage is for life diminishes the power of marriage as an institution to foster the ideal."[4]

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[1] Thoughts on Problems of the Day, pp. 45-46.

[2] Nature, Man and God, p. 182.

[3] Thoughts on Problems of the Day, p. 50.

[4] Essays on Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, p. 118.

In keeping with his view of a "sacramental universe," Temple defined marriage in the same terms: "The whole conception of Christian marriage is sacramental; it is concerned not with the spiritual alone nor with the physical alone, but with the expression of the spiritual in and through the physical."[1]

Temple has suggested that "there is no act which it is my absolute duty, independent of circumstances, to do or not to do."[2] He makes adequate room for the relativity of moral behavior in the realm of politics. There is less room for compromise in economics. Regardless of the circumstances there can be no acceptance of divorce or re-marriage. On the latter issue, Temple is not a realist because he absolutely insists on adherence to a principle without due consideration to the circumstances to which it applies.

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[1] Ibid., p. 114.

[2] Nature, Man and God, pp.178-179.

CHAPTER II

V. A. DEMANT

Biographical Data

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II. Culture and Liberalism

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        a) Christian Civilization

V. A. Demant

Biography

1893	Born, November 8
1929 - 1933	Director of Research to Christian Social Council
1933 - 1942	Vicar of St. John-the-Divine, Richmond, Surrey
1942 - 1949	Canon Residentiary, St. Paul's Cathedral
1949 - ____	Canon of Christ Church and Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, Oxford University
1957 - 1958	Gifford Lecturer, University of St. Andrews "The Penumbra of Ethics"

CHAPTER II

A THEOLOGY OF SOCIETY

A. THE NATURAL ORDER

Vigo August Demant would be the first to register a vigorous objection to being included in a survey of Protestant ethical realism. Theologically he is not a child of the Reformation. He is not indebted to the great sixteenth century reformers but rather to the thirteenth century framer of Catholic theology, Thomas Aquinas. He would undoubtedly see himself as standing within the main stream of Anglo-Catholic theology and social thought. In spite of his theological perspective, his influence has been felt predominantly within non-Roman Catholic circles. We will hope to show in the course of our discussion why we see him as an ethical realist.

The Christian religion for Demant is not primarily a purveyor of ideals which challenge men to work harder for the achievement of what ought to be. He views Christianity as providing us with a clearer insight into things as they really are.

> May not the very reason why Christian ideals are ineffective be that we have now for some centuries thought of the Christian religion as the dispenser

> of ideals and the voice of exhortation to the sluggish will, whereas in fact the Christian Church which converted the world began not with ideals of exhortation but with affirmation of the nature of reality? It was a doctrine of what is much more radically than of what ought to be.[1]

The Christian gospel was "good news" precisely because it illuminated men as to the true nature of God, the essential nature of man and the forces that distort his nature. It is questionable how self-evident this insight is when Demant says, "Christ speaks to men of what they are--'children of the Father', 'branches of the vine,' 'runaway sheep,' 'children of wrath'--as the ground of his call to obedience."[2] Are they really children of the Father, branches of the vine, the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Or is Christ holding before men the possibility of what they should become?

When Demant speaks of the forces which violate man's true nature, he is not only calling our attention to things as they really are but he is also pointing, by implication, to what they ought to be. Demant seems to be unaware of the "oughtness" that is apparent in what "is." He declares, "The good news is that God, who is the source and end of the created world, is by an act of divine initiative restoring

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[1] V. A. Demant, Theology of Society, (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), p. 150.

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

things to their true nature."[1] Is he saying that God is doing or has done what ought to be done to bring things back to what they ought to be? Even for Demant it appears that the "good news" is not the fact that in Christianity we learn that man is a fallen creature but that God is redeeming him. "In Jesus Christ, God the Son, the creative power of God pierces, purifies and transforms the creation."[2] Now Demant seems to suggest that it is "good news" that God in Christ is showing us what ought to be and is actively working to bring it into being.

The Christian faith is not only good news because it tells us what "is" but also because it clarifies our insight into the right course of action and provides us with the power to do it. "It is supremely a gospel, an offer of divine power at the point where the good course is clear but where the ability to take it breaks down."[3] Now Demant implies that Christianity is primarily good news because of its power to work in us at the point of our weakness rather than fundamentally an insight at the point of our ignorance. His first theme, however, must be given priority over the second: "Religion is a word of truth about the 'is' before it can be a word of power about the 'ought.'"[4] The two ideas

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[1] Ibid., p. 11.

[2] Ibid.

[3] V. A. Demant, God, Man and Society, (London: SCM Press 1933), p. 45.

[4] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 152.

are combined when he says, "Christian philosophy insists that there is an ultimate identity between the 'ought' and the 'is,' that what man ought to be that he truly is."[1]

Demant insists that Christianity is a source of power precisely because of its doctrine of what "is."

> Nothing is clearer from the everyday life in personal and public relations than that men are but slightly moved to action by advice and exhortation or by visions of an ideal world. They <u>are</u> moved by words of affirmation as to what they are or can be, a revelation of the truth about themselves that comes as a discovery, or they are moved to act by provocation at an offensive declaration of what someone thinks they are. The faith that has moved men has always been an indicative before it was an imperative."[2]

For Demant the Christian faith is also a <u>philosophy</u> of what man is and he turns to Thomas Aquinas for an enunciation of its basic principles.

> This Christian philosophy contains three axioms. The first is that in the actual world things are not true to their essential nature. There has been a fall. The second is that 'the good' of anything is a recovery of its true nature, and that this recovery is made, not by any self-improvement, but by the act of God. There follows the third principle, that the true nature of any created thing is only sustained when it is held to its true end by supernatural direction and power.[3]

Men are not true to their "essential nature" because it is also part of their nature as spiritual creatures to

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 14-15.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 151.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 11.

express themselves in freedom. This tendency to pervert or distort man's true nature is what we mean by sin. As long as the option is there man will say "No" to God.[1] It would seem, according to Demant's method of reasoning, that man's "No" is as much a part of his nature as man's "yes." Was there ever a time when man by nature said "Yes?" For Demant "the Fall" seems to have been a particular historic experience rather than an existential experience which all men sooner or later know. When Demant says, "We have been turned out of Paradise,"[2] the implication is that man was once in paradise. The Genesis story tells us that only one man and one woman were in paradise and they were not there for very long! If, by the Fall, Demant refers to an existential experience common to all men, it is not altogether clear. Do men have a sense of "Paradise Lost" or is it, in fact, an awareness of a paradise yet to be found? Demant is not specific enough in telling us when we were in paradise and when or how we lost it. Was it an experience of the race in the long process of history or is it a personal, repeatable experience in the life of every individual? We cannot be sure what Demant means.

Demant persistently expounds the idea that Christianity is trying to restore something which has been lost. For him it is not pointing us in the direction of a "new heaven and

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] V. A. Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 87.

a new earth." God is "restoring things to their true nature."[1] But Demant has insisted that the Christian is a realist because "he regards the good as an objective fact. It exists; it is not an ideal."[2] One is inclined to think Demant is espousing a reversed idealism. He has an aversion to future utopias but apparently has an affinity for a paradise in the past that must be recovered. He cannot verify his past paradise any more than another man could verify his future utopia. But the true nature of man and the world did not particularly have historical existence for Demant. As he sees it, redemption is "recovering for the world what it had in God's mind at the beginning."[3] Christianity is not trying to recover what the world once experienced but restoring what was "in God's mind" from the beginning.

Demant tries to overcome the distinction between the ideal and the real by insisting that the "ideal," or the final end of man in the recovery of his true nature, is the ultimate reality.

What God had in mind, man knows as the natural law or Lex Naturae. Man is a restless creature because he is being pulled toward the center of his true existence by God through

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

[3] Christian Belief Today, (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1952), p. 117.

the natural law. On the other hand, man's anxiety is compounded because there are other forces in the outer regions of his existence which pull him away from his true center. The essence of man's sin is that he puts his own "ingenious achievement" into the center of his life. The result is that man attempts to overcome the alienation of his existence from its created purpose by setting up a false absolute.[1]

> Now, this force which the theologians call Lex Naturae means that which appertains to the nature or essence of human life, and is not to be equated with what we now call Nature, for this Nature is that part of reality which remains when the transcendent God and the human spirit which transcends Nature are left out of account. That which appertains to the nature of man (and I shall use the Latin term to distinguish from Nature) includes the link between human existence and the eternal God as a bare fact--without that consciousness of the link and response to it which is religion--it also includes, that is to say, what makes more than an item in the cycle of Nature of a drop in the stream of history. The force by which he is alienated from his true nature, and from the divine source of things, is a perversion of the spiritual mobility he has as something made in the image of God with His freedom over His creation.[2]

The supernatural link is an essential feature of what Demant means by nature because without it creation would not

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[1]Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, pp. 74-75.

[2]Ibid., p. 74.

be "true to itself, i.e., to the order of creation."[1] And further, as quoted earlier, it is an act of God which restores anything to its true nature. The third axiom of the Christian philosophy was that created things are held to their true purpose by "supernatural direction and power."

> The Natural Order of human life is therefore transcendent, in that it is essentially dependent upon God although He is wholly distinct from it; it is noumenal, in that its pattern is never a phenomenon to be observed, but its true meaning can be apprehended only by human intelligence; it is eschatological, in that it reaches its fulfillment only in God's final perfecting of Creation. The natural order affects the phenomena of human cultures but is never embodied totally in any of them. Men are led to cynical opportunism or impotent relativism when this fact of the Natural Order is denied; they are led to utopian illusions and ideological tyrannies when it is assumed to be immanent in one set of social purposes and the group of men who put these purposes into practice. The Natural Order exists as a norm and an operative force in man as such. The conscious task of any generation is to discover and to work with it.[2]

The Natural Order is transcendent in the sense that it is God's design for creation but it does not exhaust what we mean by God. It is more like the plan by which God fashioned the world. In addition it is noumenal and therefore cannot be completely identified with the created world. Man in his sinful pride is always trying to elevate some observable

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[1] V. A. Demant, Christian Polity, (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), p. 100.

[2] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 83.

phenomenon, especially his own accomplishments, into the position of the highest good. This occurred, Demant says, when man saw himself as only part of the world process.[1] "Freedom from God means slavery to creation."[2]

The Natural Order is eschatalogical in that its full realization is beyond history. It will be an act of God and not the culmination of man's effort to perfect society.

It is interesting that Demant should suggest each generation must "discover" and work with the Natural Order. It may, as he says, be apprehended by human intelligence but this in no way implies that man on his own can find it in its entirety. Human intelligence may understand it but the discovery is an acknowledgment of God's redeeming act in Jesus Christ. "The Catholic view holds that the redeemed man does know something of connection between God as Creator and Preserver and God as Redeemer in Christ."[3] The burden of ethics is not to discover what the Natural Order is but to put into practice what we know it to be in Jesus Christ. "Catholicism is a doctrine of things in their nature before it is a code of conduct. The Church is the guardian of faith before it is or can be the custodian of morals."[4]

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p. 75. Christian Polity, pp. 58-59.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

[3] Ibid., p. 97.

[4] Ibid., p. 40.

We find in Jesus Christ not only a clue to the character of the Natural Order but in Him is the power or the divine grace which overcomes the disruptive forces which stand over against it. Christianity has no monopoly on the idea of a Natural Order. Demant is all for promoting co-operation between Christian and non-Christian in working for a society which will reflect the essential nature of man.[1] Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on the consequences of such an endeavor. The Natural Order may have universal implications but in Jesus Christ there is a unique content of meaning and a special source of power for the restoration of man to his true nature.

> The idea of a natural order is not peculiar to Christianity. It belongs, with or without the name, to all religion which has a social and ethical content, and to all social ethics whether religious or secular. These all imply two realities: the actual state of man, which is separated from or in conflict with his good, and the good of man, which is held to be the fulfilment or recovery of his true nature. The Christian Faith introduces a complication into this picture, for it asserts that the power by which man departs from his essential nature cannot effect the recovery without the action of Divine Grace which is super-natural. Grace is given from beyond his nature as an embodied spirit and yet his fulfilment is not complete without it.[2]

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 70.

[2] Edited by Maurice B. Reckitt, Prospect for Christendom, (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), p. 29. Demant, Theology of Society, pp. 72-73.

1. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The major theme in Demant's writing is not devoted to an elaboration of the nature of man as such. He is primarily concerned with a diagnosis of man in society. He is, however, fully aware that this can never be a problem in isolation from the other relationships in which man is involved.

> The problem of man in his social relations is larger than the problem of the behaviour of men to one another, either as individuals or groups. Purely inter-personal behaviour is hardly ever an independent problem. For man is at least two other things besides being a term in a purely men-to-men relationship. He is a part of nature. ...He is also a spiritual being. ...The drama of human life lies in the continual tension between these three facets of human existence, and social problems are largely problems because the behaviour of men to men and with men has to be squared with, on the one hand, their dependence on nature, and on the other, the demands of personal and group fulfilment. We can call these three relationships, reversing the order, man's relationship to God, to the Earth, and to his fellows.[1]

The limits and possibilities of these three relationships must be accepted and held in tension with each other to provide a true understanding of man in society. Stress one at the expense of the others and you will distort the natural order. Religious pietism or individualism tends to emphasize the first: man's relationship to God. Various forms of materialism have given too much of their attention to the second: man's relationship to the Earth. Many of

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[1] Demant, Christian Polity, pp. 43-44.

the social reform movements have been basically humanistic in their consideration of the third: man's relationship to his fellows.

In Demant there is an emphasis on the first in his theology of society. He emphasizes the second in his appraisal of economics and the third is emphasized in his view of politics.

Demant firmly rejects all "social contract" theories. "Christian Theology has nothing to do with any theory that pre-supposes men to be by nature an aggresive individualist and to be gradually evolving into a social being."[1] Society is seen as a part of the natural order and not as an after-thought. "Society is in the nature of reality, it is not the result of any special faculty in man."[2] It is part of the given.

There are, according to Demant, at least two sets of observers who have misunderstood the nature of society. The first is the "intellectualist's fallacy." It is best characterized by the anthropologist who tries to explain the social life of primitive people by regarding them as "pure individualists" or "undiluted communists." The implication is that community develops from the former and individuality emerges from the latter. Demant's observation is that in primitive societies the individual and group life

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 17.

[2] Demant, Christian Polity, p. 50.

are in a concrete relationship and the "concepts of individual and group do not exist. This division between individual and group is the result of conflicts in society, not the cause of them."[1]

The second misunderstanding is the "moralist's fallacy." Because of the moral demands made upon us to hold society together, the moralist assumes that society is brought into existence through the moral activity of man. "Because he sees that moral effort is required to combat the forces which tend to break up society, the moralist therefore concludes that society is the creation of moral effort on the part of man."[2] But, according to Demant, we must not confuse the struggle against socially disruptive forces with the social principle itself.

The primary social unit is the family. It is here that man finds his personal and social life in their intended unity. "The truth that the family is the elemental and therefore the normative, social unit, is the sociological expression of the fact that man finds his life more completely fulfilled in the sharing of a common total life with others ... but if the family is maimed in the interests of any economic, political, or cultural good, the natural law is violated."[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 51.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 85.

Demant also reminds us that even our family relationships must take their proper place in the natural order. Because of their lofty character, as Jesus warned, our family ties are most likely to replace our super-temporal loyalty to God.

As we have already seen, Demant divides man's social life beyond the family into three general areas: culture, economics, and politics. To understand them in their proper perspective is to clarify the implications of the natural order for our social relations. We shall eventually deal at some length with these three major areas of social life. At this stage of our discussion, it might be helpful to define these segments of the social order and see how they relate to each other.

Demant refers to <u>culture</u> as the "inner side of civilization."[1] It includes the arts, knowledge and ceremonies---"all that qualifies life and does not merely preserve it."[2] Culture has a metaphysical priority and not a physical or moral precedence over politics and economic activity.

> Cultural activities have a metaphysical priority in that in them the spirit of man operates most centrally from within outwards, less conditioned by the determinisms which of necessity belong to political and economic activities. Cultural goods grow by sharing them, whereas politics is largely the checking of power

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[1] V. A. Demant, <u>Our Culture: Its Christian Roots and Present Crisis</u>, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1947), p. 2.

[2] Demant, <u>Theology of Society</u>, p. 86.

> by power and economics is concerned with the making and distribution of things and the comparison of effort put forward with the satisfactions gained. Cultural bonds are more essentially spiritual and universal than political or economic ones.[1]

Politics includes government, military power and the establishment of law. "Politics represents the collective effort of the spirit of man to protect life from the threat which resides in the egoism of men and groups and to co-ordinate on the basis of certain common values the activities of organized society."[2]

Demant goes on to say that politics is conditioned more by the determinisms of nature and history than the cultural. It does, however, have a spiritual mastery of them. "It has therefore its own moral responsibility. This is not that of forming the ethical and cultural purposes for men, but of enabling men with diverse non-political purposes to live with that degree of solidarity which a common citizenship requires."[3]

Economic activity is related most to the physical side of existence. It is primarily concerned with the production and distribution of goods. We must not under-estimate, in this process, the impression which the human spirit makes upon these physical realities and vice-versa. Demant is convinced that the worst violation of the natural order

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 87.

[3] Ibid.

occurs in the field of economics. This undoubtedly accounts for the predominance of his writing in this field.

The major problems in the economic area are caused by either those who reject any spiritual control or those who exert unlimited spiritual control.[1] By "spiritual control" Dement does not mean a purely religious control. He refers rather to the purposes for which economic activity may be used without reference to economic ends. We shall later discuss the conflicts and abuses which arise out of man's attempt to accept or avoid spiritual control of economic affairs.

Our present purpose is to see how Dement relates his view of a natural order to an understanding of social relations. These categories of his are so related to each other that they must be kept in their proper place. In addition, there is a proper order within each category which cannot be changed without eventually having its effect on the others. "Where the natural order is seriously contravened in any set of relations the disorder infects all the others. Particularly, each activity which is out of its proper place or disordered within tends to prey upon the activity above it in the natural scale."[2]

Dement has already referred to the necessity of holding all of these activities in a state of tension with

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Dement, Theology of Society, pp. 89-90.

each other and above all with the divine reality which transcends them. The paradox emerges when we see that he wants us to appreciate the sense in which each sphere can function with an authenticity all its own. "To secure and uphold the secular autonomy of every valid human activity is therefore a task of theological and religious responsibility."[1] Autonomy, tension and spiritual control are apparently irreconcilable terms but Demant insists that it is man's devotion to God which alone can assure the autonomy of each function. It is God who has given them their special authority. "Where there is no transcendent point of reference, there is no datum for the natural order in the immanent sphere; this becomes the field of an unguided scramble for power among the organized functions themselves."[2] That is, without God, there is no premise from which our inferences about the social order can be drawn. "Only a theological conception of a natural order can identify the central permanent data, for these inhere in the relation of the human spirit to the transcendent source of all existence."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 91.

[2] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[3] Ibid., p. 91.

II. CULTURE AND LIBERALISM

Demant has defined culture as all of those aims and activities of man which are beyond the mere necessity of keeping alive.[1] It includes spiritual aims and ethical codes, the pursuit of knowledge, and cultivation of the arts. Encompassed also are those systems of thought which enlighten man as to the meaning of his existence. Cultural life and sin are two characteristics of man as he stands in the created order as a spiritual being.[2] Culture, as Demant sees it, is part of a larger whole called civilization. As we noted earlier, culture is the "inner side of civilization." It is the mental or spiritual framework within which one views the nature of human existence. The three main ingredients of civilization are, "ethics, conquest of nature and some view of the nature of ultimate reality."[3] The way one understands the nature and relationship of these ingredients is rooted in a culture.

"Civilization is not natural to man."[4] Man has a spirit by creation and society is part of God's original gift but civilization is something which man cultivates. "He begins to make civilization when his spirit is confronted

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[1] Demant, Christian Polity, p. 61.

[2] Ibid., p. 63.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 32 and Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p. 161.

[4] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 32.

by a particular kind of historic situation in the divine dispensation."[1] It is difficult to understand why Demant would say that "civilizations have spread, they have not evolved."[2] If civilization is something man makes and is not received, then why not say it evolved? Surely he cannot conceive of civilization as a full blown accomplishment that is passed from one group to another. At least, he would have a stronger case if he were to present some concrete evidence that his assertion is confirmed by the facts. "The advent of civilization is the beginning of history."[3] But Demant has said that civilization emerges when the spirit of man is "confronted by a particular kind of historic situation." Now it appears that history precedes civilization. How can history precede civilization if civilization is the beginning of history? It emerges from a certain set of historic circumstances but Demant does not tell us just what those circumstances are.

In his diagnosis of the contemporary crisis in culture, Demant deals primarily with Liberalism and the Christian faith. Before we take a closer look at his view of Liberalism, let us see what those forces are which mold a culture:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] Ibid.

> There are three main kinds of influences which mould the soul of a civilization, which is its culture. They are, first, its dogmas--the things it takes for granted about the nature of reality. ...Secondly, there are the things individuals and the mass of men do every day or regularly--the rituals. ...Thirdly, there is the structure and organization of society. This includes the order of rank, importance and status accorded to different kinds of persons.[1]

The first influence (dogmas) is considered to be the most important one. Rituals and the structuring of society depend upon the basic view we have of the nature of reality. The liberal dogma rests on four major principles:

> Liberalism in doctrine stands for the belief that there is an objective truth which can be reached and ought to be sought by eliminating bias and cultivating disinterestedness in its pursuit.
>
> A second characteristic of the doctrine is belief in a rightness which can ultimately be a ground of appeal from the self-centered desires of men and the conflicts they bring out.
>
> The legal extension of this characteristic provides the third mark of the liberal doctrine. There is a Natural Law in the constitution of existence which can be apprehended by man and to which appeal can be made against the positive law of any particular state or legislature.
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> A fourth distinguishing feature of liberal doctrine which is implied in the other three, is a certain universalism. It assumes something common to all men as

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[1] V. A. Demant, Our Culture: Its Christian Roots and Present Crisis, (London, SPCK, 1947), p. 5.

> part of their essential nature, which cannot therefore be defined in terms of the relative position each holds or of the functions he performs in the social organism.[1]

These four marks of our Western, democratic, liberal culture did not particularly originate with Christianity. They were a part of the classical Graeco-Roman world.[2] There were some periods when, more than others, Christianity was closely linked with the liberal outlook. It is quite obvious that Demant himself has been greatly influenced by the idea of Natural Law. This is the one doctrine taken over by the Christian faith. On the other hand, the great contribution of Christianity to Liberalism is its doctrine of creation.[3] All creation is seen in a transcendent relationship to God. Not only did Christianity contribute its view of reality to civilization, but through its rituals of daily life and worship it provided the emotional, vocational and social support for its mental outlook.[4]

In more recent centuries the liberal doctrine has been incorporated into the theory of political democracy. Here is where it has been betrayed. The tragic error into which liberalism fell was its disbelief in the transcendent. For the modern Liberal there is only a temporal process of

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[1] Demant, The Religious Prospect, pp. 31-34.

[2] Demant, Our Culture, p. 11.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 43.

[4] Ibid., p. 45.

becoming. "There is no reality above the process, for that would be an absolute, and the true Liberal rejects all absolutes."[1] He is guilty of what Demant calls "immanental monism;"[2] denying being as a reality affecting becoming and reducing existence to becoming only, either by dismissing the element of being or by incorporating the idea of being in becoming.[3] This denial of the Christian understanding of the world as a temporal process related to an eternal order in God is the clue to the basis of all Demant's criticism of culture, politics and economics.

This dethronement of God is followed by man's inevitable attempt to "be as god" by elevating some part of the created order into an ultimate loyalty. The liberal dismissal of the divine absolute or displacement of the transcendent resulted in the following forms of idolatry: Reason (Extreme Rationalism or Individualism distorting freedom); Biology (Evolutionary progressivism confused biology with history); The State (Totalitarianism is the political attempt to fill the vacuum); Economics (Both Capitalism and Communism assert the primacy of economic principles. The problem is not

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[1] Demant, The Religious Prospect, p. 64.

[2] Ibid., p. 144.

[3] Ibid., p. 56.

materialism but "monism").[1] The tragedy of the liberal age is not that its aims were wrong; it was the false assumptions it made about existence.[2]

Religion has been guilty of dissecting itself from the transcendent through an unwarranted emphasis on experience or by equating itself with ethics. Christian realism, for Demant, must be rooted in this view of reality which the Catholic faith has always held; the tension of the eternal and the temporal. This religious understanding is the only basis for giving morals their absolute character.[3] The Christian must not say "no" to God or "no" to the world but must say "yes" to both. Barthianism cut off the world and Liberalism cut off God.[4] Because Christianity is a "doctrine of God, man and the world, it should be one of the main functions of the Church to give enlightenment on all the problems, fears, entanglements, in which men find themselves."[5]

We shall reserve our discussion of the Christian contribution to civilization when we examine Demant's view of "Christendom."

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p. 70, p. 112.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

[3] Demant, The Religious Prospect, p. 66, p. 80.

[4] Ibid., pp. 179-181.

[5] V. A. Demant, "The Social Mission of the Catholic Revival," Christendom, Vol. II (March, 1932), p. 107.

III. POLITICS

A. CHURCH AND STATE

It is extremely important for the Christian of today to work out what he conceives to be the nature of the State and what he can legitimately expect the State to do. Demant is especially convinced that this is an urgent task because whatever Christian view we have of politics was worked out in a period when the State was something quite different from the present day secular state. Here is one place where even Thomas Aquinas is not very helpful when he says, "it pertains to the office of a Prince to care for the good life of his people in such a fashion as conduces to the attainment of eternal bliss."[1] In our time it is practically impossible for the Christian to promote what he holds to be "the good life" in a society where there is such a variety of opinion as to what constitutes "a moral order."

Demant's clue to our understanding of politics comes from his suggestion that we must see man as a creature who desires to express himself in freedom and as one who by nature must live in society. "That each man desires the

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 96.

execution of his own will is the first, and that men cannot help living together is the second axiom of political science."[1]

It logically follows from these axioms that the purpose of the State is to maintain peace, order and liberty:

> For a Christian the aim of the State is twofold: it is to be the condition for embodying certain kinds of good which can only be achieved in that kind of association; this, however, involves the possibility of non-Christian forces using it for their aims. The State also exists as the guarantee of liberty, in so far as liberty does not conflict with the first condition of social cohesion. While to the Christian mind liberty is always "for something," the State can only guarantee it as freedom from certain restraints. It is the Church's task as Church to make use of the liberty the State gives, to define and persuade what it is for.[2]

As we noted earlier, in Section II, Demant rejected the idea that the State was in any way responsible for the definition of ethical or cultural purposes for men but was responsible for the establishment of "that degree of solidarity which a common citizenship requires."[3] The Christian understands that liberty, for example, is not a spiritual end in itself. It is simply the climate in which higher spiritual ends may be pursued. Christians are

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[1] V. A. Demant, "Political Dialectic," Christendom, Vol. I (March 1931), p. 69.

[2] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 105.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 87.

convinced about the "ultimate identity of moral and spiritual purposes with the principles of permanent social harmony."[1] The world at large, however, is so unaware of its meaning that it is not a very helpful guide for the Christian engaged in politics. Peace, order and liberty can, under the circumstances, serve as a starting place and the Christian along with the non-Christian can support their maintenance.

Christians must also remember that they work within a "fallen" order. "The world order, including human society is perverted. It is under sin. The actual needs of men as we see them in ourselves and others are the needs of man after the Fall."[2] Man without the Fall would still need some form of political organization in order to provide the community with certain useful services. It is because of man's sin that politics must resort to the use of coercive power.

> The use of coercive power is both the result of sin and the occasion of greater sin. Politics are good to the extent to which they use this dangerous instrument of power in the interest of the good aims of a community. But aims and power are always liable to fall apart.[3]

The organizational function of politics can be ascribed to the finiteness of man and the coercive forces are due to

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 104.

[2] Demant, Christian Polity, pp. 15-16.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 216.

man's sinfulness. Demant reveals a penetrating insight when he suggests that sin is often compounded in political activity which refuses to accept the limitations of finitude and erects various means of overcoming those limits by appropriating absolute power to itself. "Redemption removes the feeling that creaturely limitation is a defect and allows the redeemed to stand joyfully before God with all his finitude."[1]

The democracies suffer from the lack of effective political aims while the totalitarian tendency is to abandon aims and resort to pure power. "Men are continually in danger of giving up the difficult art of putting power behind their aims and relapsing into one or other of two evasive basic attitudes. Either they believe that power, success, the event, creates the good, the true, or they imagine that good aims carry their own power."[2] The use of power does not have its own virtue automatically built into it nor do good purposes inevitably release their own power. Totalitarian systems violate the first and democratic systems tend to ignore the second assumption.

The role of religion in politics "is not to be the sustainer of political activity, but so to guide social and functional relationships that politics take their proper

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[1] Ibid., p. 215.

[2] Ibid., p. 217.

and limited place in co-ordinating non-political activities."[1] Religion can strengthen the "pre-political" sphere of man's life which includes family, culture and vocation. Through his understanding of the natural order, Demant sees religion as helping man to break up his problems into the various layers as God has created them. If in politics man is determined to live under some all-inclusive principle which is less than God, then he is falsely unifying that which God has separated into autonomous spheres. Their true unity lies with God and not with each other.[2]

We can expect the healing of our social disorders through a recovery of Christianity. "By Christianity I mean a certain relation of man to God, taught and established by Christ, which offers a criterion for putting each interest and activity in its proper place, or, as Christians would say, enables it to do the job which God intends it to do for man."[3] To put society in order we must begin with the family. It has priority over all other social considerations because it is ordained by God to have precedence over the State and economic systems as "a school for the rearing of human beings as persons."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 218.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 232.

[4] Ibid., p. 233.

More specifically we must ask where the Church fits into this pattern. How does the Church relate itself to a predominantly secular society where totalitarianisms are more and more defying the State?

> The secularization of life is largely due to the failure of the Church: so the problem of the Church is not primarily its independence, which must be upheld, but freedom to exercise its responsibility for, not Christian man, but man. Totalitarianism is not a phenomenon to which the Church can pharisaically say 'no'; it is a phenomenon which should turn the Church to a revolutionary penitence for its apostasy. The Church's distinctiveness must be upheld, not as independence, but so that priority of the spiritual can be proclaimed as giving an end to political, economic and cultural means.[1]

Demant suggests that the secular authorities have the problem of trying to discover the correct means for achieving those social aims which the Church through its special discernment has helped to formulate. The distinctiveness of the Church "is to mean not aloofness from the secular and material affairs, but insistence on the priority of the spiritual as giving an end to political, economic and cultural effort."[2] Here again Demant emphasizes the responsibility of the Church in terms of social ends. As the guardian of a particular view of man's destiny, it claims for itself a special authority and a unique function in criticizing those social and economic diseases which do violence to human personality and social order.

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[1] Demant, Christian Polity, pp. 131-132.

[2] Ibid., p. 145.

(1.) An apparent weakness in Demant's case is an over-simplification of the separation of Church and State into spheres of responsibility for ends and means. "It is the Church's business to present aims to Society and to say that the State's business is to adjust the material and organizational means at its rightful disposal to those ends."[1] He goes on to say that the Church will usually address its message to Society but it may on occasion be compelled to speak directly to the State. The Church tends to deal more with society in clarifying spiritual ends and permits the State to proceed with the practical problem of implementing those aims. "It (Church) claims no political power, but it claims the right to make political judgments."[2] It would be interesting to know what kind of "political judgments" the Church could make when he proceeds to say, "as a Church it claims no authority to demand the practice of any political or economic programme to which some or many Christians may give allegiance."[3] But the Church does reserve the right to uphold the State "on a particular issue, showing that this is done because in a particular situation it embodies a principle of which the Church is trustee."[4] Demant is now conceding that there are times

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[1] Ibid., p. 148.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 149.

[4] Ibid.

when the methods of the State may be more in keeping with the ends of the Church or may violate them. In the first case the Church will support the State and in the second it will criticize the State. This would seem to confirm our point that the means and the ends are more indisolubly united than Demant's principle of separate spheres would imply. Surely it is not as easy to put these activities into their "proper place" as Demant insists it is.

(2) Demant is a realist in his understanding of the inter-related character of all social problems. "Behind the symptomatic conflicts of interests and groups within society, we have arrived at seeing them as largely insoluble so long as certain deeper and less conscious conflicts in the complex of industrial civilization remain unrevealed and unresolved."[1] Demant makes a realistic appraisal of the profound difficulty of any man or society starting where it is and working toward something better. The Christian appears to be helpless and hopeless until some more radical reversal has taken place. Demant offers a valid insight when he says that some problems are insoluble until we solve a deeper disorder. You cannot go on taking aspirin tablets in the hope of curing a cancer of the brain. It is the Christian faith which helps us in our diagnosis of the nature of the disease and when needed it prescribes the necessary surgery. In the face of the complexity and apparent

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 117.

insolubility of political problems, he agrees with Martin Luther that the Christian must "live under protest."

(3.) Demant is a realist when he recognizes the necessity of maintaining a tension between religion and politics. Man is always tempted to take either too high or too low a view of politics. Religion in a proper tension with politics will keep man from one error or the other. Demant then tries to deal concretely with the problem of how the Christian, either directly in politics or in his citizenship, can function in a society where compromise is essential to the attainment of relatively better ends. The question often facing the politician is, "What is the best possible achievement within the structure of society as it is?"

> The common good is good on its own plane. Though it is not the same as personal perfection, we might say it is a relative good in a naughty world; therefore, it should not be despised, as you do not despise a crutch because it is not a good leg. ...We can never escape the tension between religion and politics for religion stands for the absolute truth about man and politics seek to embody the relative, limited good in an imperfect world.[1]

Because the Christian does hold religion and politics in a state of tension he can never ignore or be indifferent to the social structures around him. On the other hand, because of his religious perspective he can never be content

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[1] Demant, Christian Belief Today, p. 161.

with simply asking how something should be done but must ask questions about purpose, values and ends.

Demant is a realist when he suggests that the Christian must not adhere to his principles without any recognition of their consequences. He must choose the course of action which has the fewer evil results. "The task, distasteful perhaps to many Christians, of considering both moral principles and social consequences is unavoidable in their participation in politics."[1] The Christian in politics is not to be uncompromising in his adherence to principle. He must be realistic enough to support any program which will promote the highest possible good but he can never abandon the spiritual aims of the Christian faith. Demant implies that the Church goes on enunciating its principles while the burden of ethical decision in politics becomes a highly personal affair where each individual has to decide for himself in the light of his best knowledge of the contemporary situation and the extent to which his Christian aims can be realized in a fallen world. The Christian can be rescued from his guilt over failure through the forgiveness of the Church. He is delivered from the pride of self-righteousness over apparent success by the Church's proclamation of the unreached goal and the permanent character of the tension between the absolute and the relative.

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, pp. 111-112.

The Christian in politics will also recognize the inherent self-interest of all political programs that are clothed in the form of some idealized claim of their own goodness. "In other words, its egoism is disguised with the mantle of high principle. Christians in politics should always be aware of this, whichever party they belong to; and if they are aware of it, they will be an influence for integrity."[1] The Christian is a man of integrity not only because he more deeply understands himself but also because he should have a more penetrating insight into the nature of the contemporary situation.

The Christian can make a further contribution to politics by having "a respect and forgiveness for his opponents."[2] He lifts the level of political debate to the level of issues and not personalities. He fights vigorously for worthy causes while humbly accepting his victories and nobly bearing his defeats.

(4.) We ought to raise the question whether Demant is entirely correct in his thesis that the Church with its transcendent God is the only safe and sure guardian of man's spiritual values. In spite of her divine beginnings, Demant seems to be oblivious of the social and political nature of the Church itself. The Church as a social institution cannot be as radically isolated either from the rest of

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[1] Demant, Christian Belief Today, p. 166.

[2] Ibid., p. 167.

society or from the consequent activities of "fallen" men as Demant implies it is. He betrays a profound realism in his understanding of man in his political activity but excludes any consideration of the Church as having any part in it within her own life. Can the Church itself always stand aloof and above the relativities, compromises and egoisms of earthly institutions without ever recognizing the extent to which she is infected with the same weaknesses?

Does Demant really include the Church when he says, "A healthy society is one which recognizes that all the concerns of men; even the legitimate and valuable ones, are tainted with egoism, and its aims at a balance of power so that they do not destroy one another?"[1]

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 229.

B. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The awareness of a national identity can never be attributed to only one thing. Nationalism is a collection of group interests: political ambitions; particular cultural forms; religious sentiments; economic forces; etc. Nationalism is not one interest to be compared with other interests. It is a unity of many interests which lend themselves to a corporate self-identity. In some instances that identity has led to self-defense and protection from external forces. In other circumstances it has led to various forms of political and economic expansion (imperialism). Demant is critical of the Peace Movements which have attached the aggressive forms of nationalism while ignoring the disruption within the component forces.[1]

The problem is not nationalism as such. The existence of separate nations is no more the cause of conflict then our individualism is the source of quarrelsomeness. Nor does the fact of interdependence inevitably make for Christian internationalism. "To achieve 'rightness' in national purposes is the task of true nationalism; to be ready to interchange what each can contribute to that end, and to see that this does not forbid its achievement by another nation by violating the moral and natural law, is true internationalism."[2] A sound internationalism is based on a wholesome nationalism and does not simply eliminate nationalistic impulses.

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 124.

[2] Demant, Christian Polity, p. 255.

Demant is convinced that the source of false nationalism and internationalism can be attributed to these two economic facts: "that no nation is allowed the financial means of buying the whole of its own production, and that in consequence the 'surplus' must be exported."[1] The first leads to poverty, insecurity and injustice which stimulates unrest. The second contributes to the international friction inherent in competition and the desire for more markets. Political and finally military assistance is sought as a means of resolving the economic conflict. The greatest contribution that could be made toward the achievement of Christian internationalism is financial self-sufficiency, "to become financially less dependent upon the rest of the world, so that it would be able to withdraw from the war for export-surplus markets."[2]

This quest for surplus markets is the by-product of a defective distributive system within each nation. It is the failure to solve the problem of purchasing power which makes it impossible for the home market to consume the fruits of a highly industrialized society.[3] For Demant, this problem can be solved in the following way: "The amount of the community's unconsumed consumable production can be distributed

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[1] Ibid., p. 263.

[2] Ibid., p. 264.

[3] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 130.

by means of the mechanism of the Just Price and the National Dividend without artificially making employment merely for the sake of income."[1]

The problem of nationalism and our apparent inability to do anything about it stems from the dominance of economic forces. This is the essence of Demant's criticism before World War II. By 1949, Demant observes what he calls the "Great Reversal."[2] It can be characterized by his suggestion that the state principle has been substituted for the economic principle. Not that these two principles are in conflict with each other, but they are "both on one side of a line--on the other being the pre-political and pre-economic layers of existence."[3] Because of the more fundamental crisis in culture, man has lost his sense of moral purpose. Therefore, both the political and economic motives move in to give direction to spiritually uprooted men. Demant recognized this in the Nazi attempt to find in race-mysticism a religious foundation for its politics.[4]

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[1]V. A. Demant, How to Prevent the Next War, (London: The York Social Credit Conference Liaison Committee, 1937), p. 14.

[2]Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, Chapter I.

[3]Ibid., p. 160.

[4]V. A. Demant, The Religious Prospect, (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1939), p. 99.

Peace, for Demant, is not some goal toward which man evolves from a natural state of enmity. Peace is part of the giveness which man has lost. Peace "is part of the natural structure and essence of men's nature which is destroyed by the disruptive forces of sinful human living. ...Peace is something man has in him but has destroyed. It has to be recovered rather than manufactured."[1]

And what, precisely, does the Christian faith have to say to these "disruptive forces?" Men seldom want war, but they do want certain political, economic or cultural securities which lead them into conflict. Christianity can illuminate the basic source of these delusions by confronting men with their true nature. It can show men how their legitimate desires can be fulfilled by peaceful means. "The Christian contribution to peace begins, therefore, not with ethical exhortation but with spiritual diagnosis, for the problem is that people are not in a position to respond to moral appeals."[2] Too often the moral appeal is directed towards men's peaceful desires without showing them how they are in conflict with other cherished aims.[3] It is the responsibility of the church to show men that all wars begin at home. The church must speak to those deep inner conflicts in man and society which drive them into anti-social behavior.

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[1]V. A. Demant, "The Tragedy of War and the Hope of Peace," Church, Community and State, Vol. VII, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 176.

[2]Ibid., p. 178.

[3]Demant, God, Men and Society, p. 122.

In addition to the diagnosis, Christianity must accept the challenge of what William James called "the moral equivalent of war." "The main provocation to war now is, not so much what men hope to get out of war, but what they hope war will get out of them."[1] Men need more than illumination; they need inspiration. The church must make men spiritually and socially sensitive so that peace becomes as exciting and heroic as war.

Thirdly, the church must strengthen its own international outlook. There must be an extension and proclamation of the universal character of the Christian faith. Through her own example the church could show the world the nature and possibilities of true association.[2]

A further contribution is for the church "to discern the finger of God in what is unique and decisive in each historical moment and to offer power to man to act rightly in that moment."[3] Christianity, of all religions, takes history seriously. All historical demands must be fully faced, but the fact that Christianity sees beyond history to the Will of God gives it the power to act within history in a way no earth-bound Utopia ever could.

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[1] Demant, How to Prevent the Next War, pp. 3-4.

[2] Demant, God, Man and Society, pp. 138-145.

[3] Demant, The Tragedy of War and the Hope of Peace, p. 192.

1. Demant is a realist in his recognition of the complex character of international relations. Men are called to look beyond the war problem and to search for a solution to the problem of social living. External problems between nations are the result of seeking a solution to internal problems in the wrong way. We must solve the political and economic problems but they are not really corrected until we grapple with the deeper motives of men.

His sharp criticism of many peace movements is aimed at their unwillingness to probe deeply into the source of the problem or at their solutions which often in reality compound the problem. For example, disarmament is not the problem and to disarm without solving the unemployment problem would only aggravate even further the economic problem.[1]

2. There is a realistic attempt to deal practically with economic problems as one of the major sources of international conflict. In Demant's view of economics, we may have an accurate diagnosis of the problem, but the question is whether his solution is within the realm of possibility. The goal, we are told, is economic "self-sufficiency." Nations must become financially strong and then true internationalism can be achieved. Does not the distribution of the earth's resources make some kind of economic interdependence a necessity in order for the weak to become strong? Demant seems to reverse the process by suggesting that a

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 133.

genuine internationalism will be found in the co-operation of the strong and therefore the weak must first become financially independent. To become "financially less dependent upon the rest of the world,"[1] hardly seems feasible in what Demant refers to as a world in "organic unity." A wholesome internationalism where countries recognize their inter-dependence would seem to be a better contribution to national independence. Demant is convinced that the "Just Price" and the "National Dividend" are adequate internal measures for the achievement of economic "self-sufficiency."

Demant very properly diagnosed the basic economic injustices which created the "German problem." He, like many others, terribly misjudged Germany's aggressive intentions when, in 1938, he said, "Germany is the nation most seriously involved in a policy endangering the peace, though her denial of any aggressive intent is perfectly genuine."[2]

3. Demant is a realist in his understanding of the problem which has always faced the church in the tension between its adherence to principles of love and justice; and on the other hand its relationship to the actual life of various historical communities. The realms of grace and

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[1] Demant, Christian Polity, p. 264.

[2] Demant, The Tragedy of War and the Hope of Peace, p. 186.

politics, love and economics, justice and power are to be held in tension. In Demant's judgment, the very existence of the two realms has made freedom possible.

> In its various forms this separation and interaction gave the human mind a duality of allegiance which could not be merged into one conception. This made freedom possible. ...The important feature of European civilization for our guidence here, is that it was formed by this duality having its expression in the external organization of life and not being left as a duality between this world and the other or between the state and an invisible church.[1]

The more visible the church, the greater its contribution to peace and international understanding as a counter force to political and economic power.

4. The impact of World War II made Demant even more of a realist in his understanding of a "balance of power" as a necessity in the political realm. "There is nothing essentially wrong in the idea of a balance of power. It is in fact a consequence of Christian realism in a fallen world."[2] Economic and political balances of power will contribute much to the internal health of a nation and finally to international order as a means of keeping excessive nationalism under control. Demant is enough of a realist to know that justice demands power and a balance of power is the best safeguard against any one power becoming absolute.

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[1] V. A. Demant, Malvern, 1941 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), p. 128.

[2] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 206.

5. The church is realistically challenged to become a competent observer and critic of social ills. Demant is critical of a church that wants to put its head in the sand in order to evade the difficult problems. "Religious people tend, when they hear things like that, to pat themselves on the back and avoid looking at the fact that man's spirit is incarnate with his political and economic struggles."[1] Christians cannot resign from the world. In fact, they have an assignment to do something about it.

Demant is a realist when he insists that the church does not have to wait until enough individuals are converted before it can do anything. To change human nature is one of its objects but the church dare not concentrate all its effort on that goal and ignore its social responsibilities. "The earlier passages in this international section should give sufficient grounds for believing that changes are possible in the structure of society which will render war more and more unlikely, without our waiting for the conversion of individuals to a condition of spiritual and moral perfection."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 207.

[2] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 137.

IV. ECONOMICS

A. THE HIERARCHY OF ECONOMIC VALUES

Demant is convinced that the most serious violation of the natural order in our time is in the economic sphere. Human existence suffers its most violent damage when any of its powers are exercised on a plane which do not belong to them. Not only does man re-arrange the order, but he is inclined to deify one of his legitimate endeavors. As we noted earlier, Demant's allegation is that the economic order is abused either by those who reject any spiritual control or those who exercise unlimited control.

In the first instance, when men reject the cultural and political priorities over economic purposes then the economic means and ends become reversed. Economic ends are elevated into the position of serving as moral or political aims. When economics becomes the chief end of man, he tries to make it fulfill certain moral requirements without an awareness of its inability to do so.

In the second case, men apply some moral or political aim to economic processes. Economics is distorted because it is used as a means to spiritual ends rather than to satisfy physical needs. In the first situation, economics becomes the wrong end; in the second, economics becomes the wrong means.[1]

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, pp. 87-89.

Let us briefly recapitulate the Demant view of the natural order and the area in which these spheres function:

Culture -- spiritual priority (source of our moral purposes)
Politics -- social priority (maintenance of social order)
Economics -- physical priority (satisfaction of our physical needs)[1]

Economics can be further divided into areas of responsibility and precedence: "Agriculture is basic, factory production comes second, after that commerce, and finance, the most instrumental of all, serving, but in no sense deciding economic purposes."[2] In Demant's judgment, the crisis in our social relations has appeared because we have completely reversed this order.

Demant is deeply disturbed by man's abuse of the earth. Its productive power is being drained through the aggressive expansion of an industrialized urban society. Man's disregard and disrespect for the earth must be replaced with a sense of dependence and gratitude. "Not another acre away from good-growing and other vegetation, except for housing families and for military defence, might well be the motto for restoration of the vital sources of economic life in highly

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[1]Demant, Christian Belief Today, p. 155.

[2]Demant, Theology of Society, p. 234.

industrial lands."[1] It is interesting to note Demant's inclusion of military defense as a justifiable use of land.

Industrial production and distribution are no longer directed toward their proper end because they are dominated by "trader man." The values of trader man are in opposition to those of the craftsman and the consumer. Trader man thrives on scarcity, waste and indebtedness.

> The quintessence of the trader spirit is to be seen in the financier and banker as moneylender. But trader men includes all who thrive on commissions earned solely in the movement of things, of labour, of money and of debts. In this category belong not only banking, stock exchange, insurance, but also salesmanship, advertising, most of the press and the bureaucracy of a modern state. These things have a usefully moderate place in any complex society, but if it is a directive instead of a humble place, the Natural Law of economic life is violated.[2]

Industrialism has solved the production problem which earlier economies struggled to overcome. Distribution and the money system have become the source of the present economic crisis. Both the salesman and the banker tend to develop "economic laws" which irrevocably govern their respective spheres.[3] The Christian Church, in Demant's judgment, has the right to examine the validity and question

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p.174.

[2] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 138.

[3] V. A. Demant, The Miner's Distress and the Coal Problem, (London: SCM Press, 1929), p. 87.

the dominance of these economic laws. When they reign supreme, without regard to human needs and spiritual purposes, there is a radical violation of the Natural Order.

"The problem of property began with the problem of money, which has become the most irresponsible form of property in the world. At every step in the reconstruction of society it will be necessary to change the present misbalance of economic power; some redistribution and much decentralization is necessary for a society spiritually healthy, and it is urgent that the present attitude to property be changed. But such a change depends primarily upon the dethronement of plutocracy whose heart is no longer in Agriculture or in Industry but in the Bank."[1]

When the money and credit system becomes supreme then its principles are considered to be more real than goods. Bankers are thought to be closer to the center of economic reality than producers and consumers. This, for Demant, is a complete reversal of the Natural Law in economic life.[2] Money does not directly meet the needs of men. It has only an instrumental value. Money is in reality a means but those who control it have made it an end with its own laws. It should serve, not determine, economic purposes.[3]

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, pp. 211-212.

[2] V. A. Demant, This Unemployment: Disaster or Opportunity?, (London: SPCK, 1947), p. 101.

[3] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 234.

The recovery of health in a society that is diseased by the commanding influence of economics can be achieved by "(1) the Dethronement of Trader man, (2) Restatement of the Problem of Unemployment, (3) the recovery of Agronomic Responsibilities, i.e. recognition of man's organic dependence upon the earth."[1]

In all fairness to Demant, we must not accuse him of advocating a return to social structures of medieval economics. Christianity is a guardian of certain unchangeable principles but how they are applied in ethics will vary with the changing social conditions. "The Christian religion on its practical side is a body of principles and the Christian ethic is a body of precepts derived from those principles as immutable. Social and ethical precepts derived from the same Christian principles may be widely different--nay, may have to be different in order to reflect those principles--under varying social and cultural conditions."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 137.

[2] V. A. Demant, Editor, The Just Price, (London: SCM Press, 1930), p. 111.

1. UNEMPLOYMENT

As we saw in the previous section, Demant called for a "restatement of the problem of unemployment" as an important feature of social health. Economic depression during the nineteen thirties confronted man with a social upheaval of the first magnitude. One of its worst features was the problem of unemployment.

Before we pursue Demant's restatement of the issues involved, we ought to ask by what right and on what basis does the church have anything to say about this peculiarly economic problem. "The Christian Church has, therefore, a vital concern in squarely grappling with this problem, first, because the situation is inherently wrong and absurd--what the Church Fathers would call contrary to Reason; secondly, on ethical grounds, because of the problem's human results in suffering and despair; and thirdly, as a warrant of her own claim to embody the truest view of human life known to men."[1]

Christianity, for Demant, has a concern for "rightness" in the whole of man's existence. The church must, therefore, challenge the theories of economic man which are mistakenly represented as the laws of nature. One reason for the ineffectiveness of the church is that its judgments have been confined too narrowly to "moral" issues. "But religion is as much concerned with truth as with goodness, and it is

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[1]Demant, This Unemployment, p. 13.

on the score of truth that economic and financial theory will have to be judged."[1] It is Dement's firm conviction that economic theory and practice are involved in conflicting and contradictory claims. "But if you are ignorant that a social situation involves contradictory aims you will be looking for wrong ethical conduct to account for the disasters--and you will mistake for such moral causes the moral perversions and poisoned relationships that spring from the strains imposed by the social dilemma. Your moral principles will then be looked upon by the world as unreal and the church despised as a meddler adding one more link to the chain of difficulties."[2] The church must challenge the idolatrous character of the economic assertions of superiority not only within its own sphere but over all other areas of human activity.

The church is committed to individual and social redemption. In both cases it is a matter reintegrating the alienated and conflicting fragments of personal and social life. "This is no task for the mere moralist--it is a problem of social reconstruction..."[3] Not that one can evade moral judgments, but they cannot be based on particular economic issues without regard to the Natural Law. "And when this treatment of unemployment as a goal is defended on the

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 18.

[3] Ibid.

moral ground that we cannot have the awful spectacle of the unemployed, it only proves that attempts to satisfy moral requirements without bothering about other aspects of the natural order, are bound to be ridiculous."[1]

The crux of the unemployment problem is the fact that man has not seriously come to grips with the machine. The efficiency of a highly industrialized economy has made human labor increasingly unnecessary. Industry is encouraged in the direction of unlimited production in order to overcome the dilemma of unemployment which is the result of its own efficiency. Industry is committed to a contradiction: it must be "at once efficient and also continue to provide as much work as its efficiency saves."[2]

The industrialized nations have, in the past, been able to solve the problem of exporting their surplus into the foreign markets. Therefore, if export trade declines or does not increase with the growth in production then unemployment follows. As long as foreign trade had unlimited possibilities for expansion, then the displacement of labor by the development of technological efficiency remained well hidden.

There are two major solutions: "The first is Rationalization, with its eye on the foreign market and with the aim of securing that market from the foreign producer.

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[1] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 88.

[2] Demant, This Unemployment, p. 155.

The second is Protection, which is interested to recover the market at home and aims at securing the home market from the foreign producer."[1]

Rationalization is the appropriation of whatever procedures are needed to reduce the cost of production and distribution. A concomitant of this is a control of the units of production to the capacity of the market to buy.[2] As Demant points out, if production is reduced then the income and purchasing power at home have been lowered. "In its wider aspect Rationalization is the death dance of industrialism wherein the twin partners of labour-saving technique and work-demanding theory rush round to avoid recognising their fundamental incompatibility."[3]

Protection, on the other hand, is an attempt to revive the home market to produce and consume as much as possible. The Protectionist urges the erection of tariff barriers to protect the home market from foreign competition. What the protectionists do not seem to understand, according to Demant, is that both the home and foreign market demands can be met with a "rapidly decreasing volume of employment."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 43.

[2] Ibid., p. 45.

[3] Ibid., p. 51.

[4] Ibid., p. 59.

Present policies should not be radically altered until there is a true understanding of the problem. Neither the selling nor the earning problem is basic. More employment is not needed for production nor is it required to meet material demands.

> We are insisting that "unemployment" is not the primary problem, and that so long as it is so regarded, mankind is engaged in economic and social suicide. The primary problem is that of enabling the productive system to deliver to the community the goods and services which it is capable of delivering with the amount and quality of employment required for that end. The secondary problem is to secure an equitable apportionment of the work-saving achievement of the present phase of economic development, namely, a fair reduction of work all around.[1]

Demant is in agreement with the answer given by industry that it would not pay. The buying and selling problem imposes an impossible situation. Purchasing power is simply not high enough to buy at a level where industry can recover its costs at the present level of output. In Demant's judgment, this dilemma is the result of an economic system dedicated fundamentally to making money. "In other words, there is a gap between productive power and consuming power expressed in money terms. To attempt to bridge this gap by making more goods, making fewer goods, having more or fewer people to make them or move them about, is simply to shift the

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[1] Ibid., p. 92.

incidence of the problem presented by this gap from some sections of the community to others, while the real problem remains."[1]

The final key to the problem is that we have a "money and credit" system which functions with its own laws without regard to true economic ends. Money should not take precedence over goods and goods should always be subservient to human needs. The order of human needs, goods and money is reversed in a profit centered economy.

Demant is cognizant of a number of solutions that appear to be sound but none of them have a proper diagnosis of the problem to be solved.[2] Christianity must force society into asking and answering this question: "Why do we want people employed?" Christians must see more deeply into the unemployment problem and understand that it is not simply a question of finding more work.

> The Church's task is twofold. Firstly, to insist in the name of truth and justice that the world find a way by which the demands of human beings for goods and services be the deciding factor in the policy of production, and that it adjust its theory of work and money to this end.
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> Secondly, the Church's peculiar task in this matter is to equip herself to provide the guidance required when the clumsy social discipline, hitherto supplied by the necessity of working on the scale industrialism has

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[1] Ibid., p. 94.

[2] Ibid., Chapter VI.

demanded, must give place to a much greater measure of spontaneous and freely-given social and economic activity.[1]

1. Demant is a realist in upholding the right and necessity of the Church to speak on economic issues. Christians may not have all the answers but at least they ought to be asking the right questions. Society, through the church, can be challenged to a thorough diagnosis of the economic crisis. Demant is not intimidated by the complexity of the problems and refuses to believe they are insoluble. He does not suffer from a paralysis of analysis.

There is a realism in Demant's insistence that Christians must grapple with more than the purely moral issues. A good many economic theories and practices are questioned. Whether Christianity provides as many "immutable principles" which demand economic application as Demant implies is doubtful. What those principles mean in terms of specific application might give us more alternatives than he allows. This is precisely the point at which sincere Christians are most likely to disagree. Demant does not make ample room for this possibility.

Especially in the case of the miners and the coal problem, Demant had a number of specific suggestions to remedy the situation.[2] As in the case of unemployment in

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[1] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

[2] Demant, The Miner's Distress and the Coal Problem, pp. 81-82.

general, there is recognition of the need to attack the problem on a number of different fronts. Unemployment can never be dealt with as an isolated problem.

2. Demant does not tell us how far the State should go in trying to overcome the dominance of the economic system. He is quite definite about the role of the Church in standing over against a dis-ordered economy, but what about political power as a counter-force to economic interests? "It is decidedly against the interests of religion that the life of the State should figure largely in the public mind merely as an interfering factor at the points of conflict which political institutions are too feeble to prevent. The State as an organ of Society in such a case becomes looked at as a nuisance instead of a spiritual fact."[1] It would be interesting to know just how Demant can prevent the Church from appearing as a nuisance. The State may be acknowledged as a political and social fact as the Church is a spiritual fact.

We must ask whether structures of economic power are as easily persuaded to change as Demant seems to think they are when confronted with a true diagnosis of the problem or by a proclamation of truth in regard to Natural Law. Demant gives us no historical evidence that his kind of confrontation will give the desired result. The "balance of power" concept seems to be a post-World War II concept for Demant and even then it is not taken too seriously.

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[1] Demant, This Unemployment, pp. 14-15.

"Christianity repudiates a position which allows an economic system to be a form of government, i.e. to determine what human desires should or should not be satisfied. Should it not be, in a Christian view, as efficient an organization as possible within its own sphere, leaving the education of human desires to definitely educational and religious activities."[1] It is puzzling why Demant defines the role of government here "to determine what human desires should be satisfied." His next sentence denies the implication of the first statement when he reserves that right to "educational and religious activities." If economic systems tend to determine our desires then they have not usurped the function of government but have rather assumed the role of culture.

Here again Demant refers to economics being as "efficient as possible within its own sphere." He is not seriously prepared to make that concession because he will not tolerate economic efficiency as a legitimate goal without reference to human needs and moral ends. Demant tends to ignore the extent to which one sphere has the right to intrude into another sphere.

3. There is a hint that industrialism will lose its hold and "economic laws" will give way to "spontaneous and freely given social and economic activity." For one who upholds the doctrine of Natural Law it is surprising to see how strongly Demant reacts to "economic laws." He might

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[1] Ibid., p. 140.

have been more consistent had he offered a new set of "economic laws," but in fact, he makes room for a more "spontaneous and free association of economic and social forces." He is evidently unwilling to allow this possibility as a displacement of the Natural Law on a wider scale.

We must also ask why this change must come. Is there something historically inevitable about the decline of economics as a guiding force in man's social life? Is he assuming the Church will succeed in reversing the present trend? After World War II, Dement saw the reversal but it was Government that took over the reins.

4. Demant does not seem to give due emphasis to the industrialism which has invaded agriculture. Technological and scientific methods of planting, harvesting, processing and distributing food have radically changed the farmer's sense of dependence on the land. He, too, is now dependent upon the machine and the result is less need for human labor. Demant is inclined to evade the consequences of this fact.

Because primitive men were more directly dependent upon the earth for their livelihood does not mean they had any more respect for it. This nostalgic longing for a return to the land seems to resent the idea that manpower has been replaced by the machine. Demant does not seem to appreciate how much release of men from agriculture has contributed to the surplus of labor available to industry.

5. Demant reveals a Christian sensitivity to the unemployment problem when he recognizes that no nation is entitled to solve the problem of exporting it to some other country. National politics must always be aware of their international consequences.

6. The two root causes of unemployment are the machine and money. The machine has increased production while reducing the need for human labor. The money system has not proven any adequate means of expressing the real wealth of a community. "The key to the problem of wealth distribution is the problem of the social regulation of money, of restricting it to a common measure of value, and denouncing it as a means of debt."[1] Demant may very well be enunciating a valid solution but he is not very helpful in showing how it can be achieved. The Just Price is one such suggestion.[2]

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 211.

[2] Demant, Christian Polity, pp. 240-243.

2. THE JUST PRICE

The question of price is crucial to the understanding and resolution of our economic difficulties. Industry needs to know whether lower prices are economically possible in a situation where certain demands are made for wages, working conditions and the consumer's capacity to buy. "Price therefore raises the main conflict of interests--that between employers and employees and between producers as a whole and the consuming public generally."[1]

As the title implies, the Just Price was an attempt on the part of medieval Christianity to apply principles of justice in the determination of price. The phrase itself is first used by St. Augustine but it does not become a significant concept until the Middle Ages and its consequent development of business and learning. It was an endeavor on the part of the Craft and Merchant Guilds, Companies, civil authorities and the Church to determine a reasonable wage and a fair price. It was a community judgment based upon utility, quality and supply of goods, the value of money, and the costs of production and distribution.

Dement recognizes the difficulty of applying medieval standards in a society that is radically different. During the Middle Ages agriculture was dominant and the problem was material scarcity. Our society is industrial and the problem

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[1] Dement, The Just Price, p. 6.

a surplus of goods. Demant observes four principles that characterize and contrast the medieval Just Price attitude with our modern economic views:

> (1) The whole theory and legislation concerning the Just Price shows that the Middle Ages were interested primarily in the human economic realities of production and consumption, and the commodities in which their relations were determined.
>
> (2) The second assumption concerns the medieval meaning of value. The conception of value as something objective did not rule out either a measure of the labour which produced an article or the utility which it possessed, but included them both.
>
> (3) The teaching on the Just Price and the prohibition of Usury both imply that money has only a "mediatory" significance, that it is not itself wealth.
>
> (4) For the medieval Christian thinker the laws of Nature did not operate directly upon economic activities and provide a self-correcting mechanism which always in the long run restored a sort of economic equilibrium.[1]

The contemporary insufficiency of purchasing power is due to the fact that interest payments, for the use of money, are a part of production costs and therefore wages do not fully represent earned wealth. Earnings are never enough to meet prices because of the cost of using money for production. There is, according to Demant, an artificial scarcity of purchasing power. It is a violation of principle three which prevents modern society from applying the insights of the Just Price.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 112-117.

Demant calls upon the Church to recognize the symbolic character of money and to insist that the community administer it as "an economic tool."[1] The weakness in his thesis is that he does not tell us how society can proceed to manage money as a tool or what the implications are if it could. Demant tends to over-simplify the problem and to state the solution in glowing generalities. Surely the interest charged on the use of money is not the only factor in reducing purchasing power. What is the effect of accumulated capital in the form of savings? Does not the capitalist recognize the "instrumental" character of money? Is it an end in itself or a means to power and a tool for the expansion of industry? How much of a factor are taxes and the costs of government? Demant has been inclined to level his criticism at one facet of a very complicated problem.

The medieval community, in comperative isolation, was a more easily manageable economic unit. The Just Price doctrine called for a moderation of rewards, not equally, but in keeping with an individuals station in life. A rigidly stratified social structure with a Prince at the top presents a contrasting picture to our contemporary industrialism, internationalism and political Democracy. Demant minimizes the political and cultural climate out of which the Just Price emerged and does not seriously offer a solution for the contemporary scene.

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[1] Ibid., p. 130.

3. THE DECLINE OF CAPITALISM.

The first Holland Lectures given in 1922 were entitled Religion and the Rise of Capitalism and were delivered by R. H. Tawney. V. A. Demant was invited to give these lectures in 1949 and his title was Religion and the Decline of Capitalism.

Unrestrained economic activity in the form of industrial capitalism reached the climax of its development during the nineteenth century. The twentieth century has witnessed the gradual disappearance of the economic autonomy which characterized the capitalist era. The reaction had been going on for a long time so that the rise and fall of capitalism were, in a sense, simultaneous.

> The force of these reactions resided and still resides in at least three features: in their response to claims of economic justice which was known to be violated by the inhumanities of a laissez-faire economy; in the extent to which they gave the artisan section of society a promise of economic improvement; and, what is perhaps more significant, in a doctrine, especially in Marxism, which offered men an explanation of what was happening.[1]

Capitalism soon became the victim of its own injustices. Any economic system which ignores the basic and legitimate needs of men will eventually lose its power. Capitalism went on sowing the seeds of its own destruction and Demant gives four main reasons for its final demise: "The hostility it has brought on against itself; the break-up of its own

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p. 27.

institutional framework; its parasitism on the non-economic foundations of society; and the dissipation of the dispositions which reared and sustained it."[1]

The growth of industrialism meant a comparable growth in the trade union movement as one outlet for the worker's response. This development of power groups that might become socially irresponsible led to the expansion of state control.[2]

The mounting distrust of capitalism over its inability to provide all that it promised led some, in the period of expansion, to believe that deprivation here meant that others had too much. Men looked to the state as the only means of equalizing the imbalance in the distribution of wealth.

Most of the major movements which alter historic situations find their support in a "faith that their aims are in the trend of a universal purpose."[3] The age of capitalism was strengthened by such a faith.

A second axiom was the acceptance of man's economic activity as the basis of his social existence. From that premise there emerged the principle that "market relations were central in the economic sphere."[4] What Dement observes in the twentieth century is "the move away from the kind of

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p. 92.

[3] Ibid., p. 88.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

misbalance represented by economic and market relations as the constitutive principle of society, to the state principle as the substance of community. This is a marked feature of the great reversal which we have loosely called the decline of capitalism."[1]

The economic principle is replaced by the state principle as a means of recovering a sense of community after the breakdown of the market economy. Both the East and the West have resorted to the state principle but, as Demant astutely observes, there is a fundamental difference. In the more developed Western political tradition of the democracies, the state has become the primary source of social coherence. The state has not invaded the spheres of culture, craft and religion. In the Eastern and Central European revolutions, Nazism and Communism, a segment of the society overcame the state and used it as the instrument for the achievement of something more fundamental, "such as the national destiny, or the folk soul, or the worker's revolution, or the East's independence of the West."[2]

In both cases, the "political faiths" triumphed. In the West the state has become the wrong end and in the East it is the wrong means.

> All these are ways in which man is pulled from one eccentricity by the cord that holds him to the place of fulfilment, and because he is at the same time alienated from it by seeking it in the sole dimension of his

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[1] Ibid., p. 90.

[2] Ibid.

> terrestrial existence, he goes over to another eccentric position. Moreover, all the vultures of egoism, power-striving, pride and self-deception, gather round this transformation and make full use of it. Of course, they deck themselves in the moral feathers plucked from the simple-minded doves who only know that the change is seeking to overcome the previous evil. The good which strives against this one evil becomes mistaken for the original or ultimate or final harmony of things, and thus arise colossal idolatries, oppressions and terrible sacrifices of persons for an alleged ultimate fulfilment.[1]

Demant asserts that the state principle is no more able to serve as the cement of society than the market principle. "The state can never be an object of emotional attachment which could replace a man's roots in home, property, neighbourhood and craft association."[2] In an earlier period, capitalism took the brunt of criticism for having disrupted these basic ties. Now the more powerful state in advanced collectivist societies becomes the recipient of social resentments from men who want to be treated for what they are and not for what they can do or deserve. Men look to the state for a recovery of status only to find it betrayed in a situation where they are the pawn of political power.

Demant is further convinced that Western history is being reversed. It began with a separation of the sacred and civic realms. Capitalism emphasized the secularization of life and the new political faiths have reverted to an

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[1] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[2] Ibid., p. 95.

identification of the two orders by deifying the state. "The enemy of Christianity to-day is not materialism but a false religion."[1]

Neither the state principle which man viewed as a citizen nor the market principle with man as an economic unit can be the true principle of social healing. Demant goes on to suggest that when the state principle is used as a remedy for economic sickness, "then the real disorder is more effectively concealed."[2]

When the state and economic principles monopolize our attention as the only alternatives in a quest for social health then the transcendent God has been replaced. "Then there is bound to arise a campaign against religion which seems to the contestants to be either smugly above the battle or silly supporting the other side."[3]

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[1] Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 220.

[2] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, p. 102.

[3] Ibid., p. 107.

VI. CHRISTENDOM

A. HISTORY AND PROGRESS

One of the major contributions of the Judaic-Christian Religion to Western culture has been its view of history as something which must be taken seriously. "The Jewish and Christian outlook regards both the eternal and the temporal worlds as real and significant, and have a peculiar version of the relation between them."[1] This influence has given Western man a view of history as a cosmic-spiritual drama enacted in terms of the relationship of two worlds: "the temporal or this age, and the eternal world or the age to come."[2]

The Christian faith gives a clue to the meaning of history which saves man from "either the sense of its purposelessness or an assumed position right outside it which encourages him to interpret it by some naturally conceived human Utopia."[3] When history is reduced to only a process of becoming, man is driven to view it in meaningless despair or wishful thinking. Both the doctrine of creation and Incarnation preserve the eternal element in the Godhead and they assure us "that the concrete world

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[1] Demant, Our Culture, p. 102.

[2] Ibid., p. 104.

[3] Demant, The Religious Prospect, p. 217.

process and each event in it are of divine significance and value."[1] The world process does have a purpose and the key to its meaning does not lie in the world itself, but in its relation to God who is beyond it.[2] History is a drama of real events that matter because their roots are not just in the past or the future but in God.

> One of the distinguishing marks of Catholicism is the value it sets upon historical, contingent events as the material through which revelation and grace operate. If the Incarnation is to be regarded, as Christians must regard it, as the centre and key to history, any phase of human history which like our own, appears devoid of any significance but a diabolical one, should be susceptible of judgment, diagnosis and guidance by a social therapy derived from the religion and theology of the Incarnation. Let the Church therefore re-furbish the lantern of her own philosophy of the social and temporal order, lit by the candle of her super-natural and super-temporal derivation, and turn it upon the concrete problems which give our phase of temporal history the look of a malicious swindle.[3]

It is the Christian view of history which gives the Church its right to speak on economic and political affairs. "The Christian religion is historical, attaching significance to concrete events and not exclusively to ideals and theories."[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Demant, Our Culture, p. 103.

[3] V. A. Demant, "The Social Mission of the Catholic Revival," Christendom, Vol. II (March, 1932), p. 109.

[4] Demant, Theology of Society, p. 107.

The Christian knows it is the history of a "fallen world"[1] and Demant would insist that man will not set it straight through any of his own powers. God has acted redemptively within history and He will consumate its meaning beyond history.

With Demant's view of creation, Incarnation and consumation there is hardly room for any of the liberal or humanist belief in progress. The wider implication of all we have said about Demant is that man trying to shape history according to his own terms has made a pretty bad mess of it and as long as he goes on doing so there will not be progress but inevitable regress.

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[1] Demant, Christian Belief Today, p. 163.

1. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Demant does not elucidate in depth or length what he means by the kingdom of God. There are only isolated comments scattered among his writings.

Like his view of history, the kingdom of God has two dimensions, it is from beyond this world and yet it belongs in this world. "This is to say that the Church has to relearn and proclaim that precisely because the kingdom of God is not of this world--not springing from this world--and though it is not finally for this world in the sense that it is merely a name for a stable civilization--yet it is meant to be effective in this world in a way which no earthbound Utopia can be."[1]

Demant will not permit us to identify the kingdom of God with the social order. "A good social order is not the same as the kingdom of God."[2] The kingdom of God does not relieve man of his historic responsibility but gives him a basis for acting in it.

There is an isolated passage where Demant hints that there might be some relationship of the kingdom of God to the Natural Order. "When the kingdom of God is known again as a power that reorders the social relations of man by

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[1]Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 20.

[2]Demant, Christian Belief Today, p. 125.

bringing them back to the Natural state, then the problem of the conflict between the inner and outer life becomes manageable."[1]

When writing about the Natural Order, Demant implied that the sheer proclamation of it carried its own power. Now he seems to be saying that the kingdom of God will help to usher in the reign of Natural Law rather than Natural Law serving the kingdom of God.

It is puzzling to know why there has been such an evasion of the kingdom of God. The concept is far more Biblical than any notion of "Natural Law" which, even Demant admits, was borrowed from the Graeco-Roman world. If Demant takes the Incarnation seriously, then why does he not pay more attention to the teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God?

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[1]Demant, Theology of Society, p. 163.

a) CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

A volume of essays published in 1922 under the title The Return of Christendom was perhaps the starting point for a school of thought which dominated Christian social thought in England for three decades. A Summer School of Sociology was inaugurated and supported by those associated with the movement. The same group began publishing a quarterly journal, Christendom, in 1931. The publication of this "Journal of Christian Sociology" came to an end in 1950. From the very beginning, Demant served on the Editorial Committee, served as editor of the book section and made frequent contributions to the journal. Demant was one of the key figures in what came to be known as "the Christendom Group."

Inside the front cover of the third issue, Volume I, September, 1931, and in subsequent issues, Christendom published its purpose: "Now, a constituent of the School (Summer School of Sociology), the League of the Kingdom of God, is emboldened by the needs and opportunities of the situation to establish a quarterly journal, Christendom, which shall have for its object a sustained attempt to present and elaborate a Catholic view of social issues and the construction of a valid alternative to the pagan developments of contemporary Plutocracy."

Inside the back cover of this issue, and those following, we find the basis and objects of the League of the Kingdom of God. Among other things it said:

> The League is a band of Churchmen and Churchwomen who believe that the Catholic Faith demands a challenge to the world by the repudiation of capitalist plutocracy and the wage system, and stands for a social order in which the means of life subserve the commonwealth. ...
>
> The League believes that a holy, just and free society--Christendom--will come first and chiefly through faith and thought and sacramental power--personal loyalty to Christ and His cause--and that it must express itself in zealous endeavours after fellowship in industry, commerce, citizenship and culture.

OBJECTS

(1) The insistence on the prophetic Office of the Church, and the Kingdom of God as the regulative principle of theology.

(2) The awakening of Churchmen to the lost social traditions of Christendom and the recreation of a Christian sociology consonant with the needs of the age.

This was a vigorous challenge to the Church to rethink its relevance to social issues. Christendom of the Middle Ages was viewed as the Golden Age of Church-State relations. Demant uses an interesting analogy to illustrate his point:

> Shall we say playfully, but seriously, that the first three centuries of the Christian era correspond to the stage at which there is meeting between woman and young man. The period from the conversion of Constantine to the end of the eighth century is like the period of engagement. The epoch from that date, with the coronation of Charlemagne, to the fifteenth century is represented

> in our analogy by marriage, with its tensions and mutual interaction. The sixteenth century witnesses a divorce.[1]

Whether that marriage was a blessing either to the Church or to the society would seem to be questionable. The empire was far from Holy and the church was undoubtedly more corrupt than in any period of its history. But Demant does not plead for a return to the social structure of the Middle Ages, he wants a recovery of some of the prevailing principles and, above all, the return to a relationship out of which a new responsibility can emerge in our time. It means the church will have "to find a renewed relation to society entirely different from that of the last three centuries. In brief, it has to take up the task where the break up of the Middle Ages left it."[2]

For Demant, the Middle Ages had a scale of values which had spiritual and human interests in their proper order:

> To look to the thought of the Middle Ages is therefore to look to a pattern in which social activities were conceived as having a certain order for a spiritual and therefore a truly human end. It is mere perversity to regard it as a desire to return to Medieval social structure. It is still greater perversity to regard it as a belief that man can build the kingdom of God on earth.[3]

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[1] Demant, Our Culture, p. 109.

[2] Demant, Malvern, 1941, p. 130.

[3] Demant, Christian Polity, p. 237.

Demant does not want a return to the fixed pattern of a social structure, but how much did that particular set of conditions depend upon the prevailing relationship of church and society? If it was a happy marriage, then it would be helpful if Demant were to inform us why the divorce ever occurred.

There are four major features of the contribution Christendom (Christianity and the Bible) made to Western civilization:

> It gave a terrific impress to the discovery of the self, or soul-relating it to the eternal God as well as to its setting in the world; it emancipated men not only in his mind as the Greek had done, but in the depths of his being, from being merely a part of the tribal or social or natural process.
>
> In the second place, only in Christendom did you get that division of life into sacred and secular, due to the doctrine of creation and then to the separation of religious and civic leaderships...there came into being a 'secular' realm which had its own responsibility to God, and not directly through the Church.
>
> In the third place, Christianity gave a great stimulus to the sense of history as significant.
>
> In the fourth place, there follows from the previous three developments the extraordinary activism of Western man. This activism has remained and increased, with diminishing respect and reverence towards God and the universe.[1]

Surely Demant could not be unaware of the extent to which the Church of the Middle Ages violated every one of these principles. Both the early Church and the Reformation

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, pp. 180-182.

of the sixteenth century contributed more to the formation and support of these principles than the Medieval Church ever did. (1) Intellectual integrity and freedom suffered more under the dominance of the Medieval Church than during any other period of Christian history. Science did not really come into its own until after the Reformation. (2) Was the 'secular' realm really as autonomous as Demant implies? Is he purposely ignoring the political machinations of the Medieval Church? What happened to that "marriage analogy"? Is he now upholding the divorce of the sacred from the secular? (3) The obsession of the Church with the "saving of souls" for heaven tended to diminish rather than stimulate an interest in history. (4) The activism of man was profoundly encouraged by the Calvinistic contribution to the Reformation.

Christendom of the Middle Ages, by Demant's definition, in principle and practice, left much to be desired. It is precisely the failures of "Christendom" which have reduced any serious possibility of its return.

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[1] Demant, Religion and the Decline of Capitalism, pp. 180-182.

CHAPTER III

MAURICE B. RECKITT

Biographical Data

I. Historian

II. Journalist

III. The Christian in Politics

IV. A Christian Sociology

Maurice B. Reckitt

Biography

1888	Born, May 19
1903	Wellington College (Education impeded by ill-health)
1907	St. John's College, Oxford
1911	Taught history at Ipswich Grammer School
1913	Returned to Oxford and read for a Thesis
1915	Labor Research Department
1924	Invited by G. K. Chesterton to join the editorial board of G. K.'s Weekly.
1931 - 1950	Editor of Christendom

I. HISTORIAN

Maurice B. Reckitt reflects the same Anglo-Catholic, Natural Law, theological position we found in V. A. Demant. Theoretically their views are similar but in method of expression and implementation there is some variance. While Demant tends to expound and defend a rigid theological position, Reckitt is disposed to present a broader historical perspective. Three of his major works are historical surveys of the Christian Social Movement.[1]

Along with Demant, Reckitt is convinced that medieval society embodied a number of Christian doctrines which the Renaissance and the Reformation had destroyed. The much desired and needed purification of the Church was not forthcoming. Instead there was a "disastrous fragmentation of Christian truth."[2] The great virtue of the medieval order was its unity under God. It was other-worldly and world-affirming. There was no sharp dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, "behind all earthly loyalties was the notion that, from King to peasant, each held his trust ultimately

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[1] The Church and the World (Vol. I, II, III) 1938-1940. Faith and Society 1932. Maurice to Temple 1947.

[2] Maurice B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, (London: Faith Press, 1954) p. 132.

from God and for the community."[1] Medieval society may have been crude and cruel but Reckitt insists that it was in the main a healthy society.[2]

Reckitt is less inclined to "return to the middle ages." "The Church cannot 'go back to the Middle Ages,' true; but it must go back to where Christendom, however excusably, however understandably, failed, in order to grasp the significance of that failure and repent of it."[3] We may not be able to recapture the same forms and structures of a former time but we can look back into history and observe those principles which give health and stability to society. "It is not utopian to believe that obedience to God's laws will give men a healthy society or that the Christendom of former days provides us with clues for the recovery of one."[4]

No matter how desirable it is to look back, Reckitt refers to a contemporary realism which does not postulate "some situation we should (perhaps rightly) prefer in place of that in which history has in fact placed us."[5] We must

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[1] Ibid., p. 123.

[2] Ibid., p. 126.

[3] Ibid., p. 145.

[4] M. B. Reckitt, "The Christian Virtues in Politics," Christendom, Vol. XIII (Dec. 1943), p. 102.

[5] M. B. Reckitt, The Person and the Family, (London: Industrial Christian Fellowship, 1949), p. 3.

go back, however, to the end of the middle ages to ask our questions about the nature of the Church and Society. The break-up of a Christian civilization in the fourteenth century left the Church with an unsolved problem. We tend to seek answers within a predominantly secular framework and we shall never succeed until we begin asking the right questions again.[1]

Unlike Demant, Reckitt is ready to concede the failures of the Church to meet the emerging challenge of medieval society. He reveals a more wholesome historical realism that does not idealize or unduly defend the weaknesses of the Church: "The failure of Christendom was, if not merited, at least prepared by the grave political and ecclesiastical errors and scandals in which the Church became involved in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries."[2]

By the time of the Reformation, the Church had lost its social initiative and in its retreat from culture it became 'individualized' and 'nationalized.' From the middle of the eighteenth century to the present we have been in a 'post-Christian' phase in which the Church has remained "the organized remnant of a minority religion."[3] For Reckitt, the greatest point of failure has been the inability of the Church to interpret the meaning and

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, p. 132.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, Faith and Society, (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1932), p. 275.

[3] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, p. 176.

importance of the Industrial Revolution. Like Demant, he maintains that the machine is for man and not man for the machine.

While avoiding the historical fallacy, Reckitt points out the futuristic fallacy of the twentieth century dictatorships. Contemporary social policies fall short of the Christian standard in one or other of these respects: "For it is not enough either that we should concede a value to personality in some future order, while treating men to-day as more raw material for our social experiments; or alternatively that we should ration out a degree of security to them now, without preserving for them the free opportunities essential to a spiritual being."[1] The value and significance of persons here and now is an essential Christian concern. Men need not live for to-day dreading tomorrow; nor should they live for tomorrow in despair of today. The Renaissance set out to exalt man and history shows the culmination of a secularized society in the abasement of man in the twentieth century.

In defense of his more historical approach to social problems and principles, Reckitt admits the necessity for caution in appealing to the past for authority but he also warns against those who make their appeal to authority in

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, Religion in Social Action, (London: John Heritage, 1937), p. 25.

the assumptions of the modern outlook.[1] The Christendom Group, he affirms, may not always base its present policy on current possibilities but in its adherence to a basically theocentric order it is no more remote from--- or resistant to---secular society than any other Christian interpretation of man and society.[2]

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, Maurice to Temple, (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), pp. 203-204.

[2] Ibid., p. 203.

II. JOURNALIST

Maurice B. Reckitt's influence on the Christian social movement was most widely known and felt through his work as editor of Christendom. This quarterly journal dedicated to the elucidation of a Christian Sociology was the main voice of the Christendom group and Reckitt was their chief spokesman. As editor, from its inception in 1931 to its demise in 1950, Reckitt editorialized on a wide range of subjects. It was no mean accomplishment to supply the leadership of such an enterprize during the great social upheavals before, during and after World War II. He was never a militant "crusader" for a cause but more consistently a prophetic diagnostician of social ills men faced and needed to fight. He was seldom polemic with those who opposed him but more frequently invited a response from any quarter that had something significant to say. Reckitt wrote with competent relevance about contemporary issues which had no simple solutions. Above all, he wrote with a sense of urgency about the unsolved problems and sounded the alarm in those Christian quarters that preferred to ignore them.

Reckitt thought it was quite unrealistic to 'Christianize the social order.' The first necessity was to Christianize the Christians who no longer understood the nature of the world around them and the extent to which it was at variance with the will of God.[1] This meant not only a return to

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "The Return to Theology," Christendom, Vol. V (June, 1935), p. 83.

theology but a new awareness of the relevance of the Faith to sociological issues. Men needed not only a social conscience but also a social consciousness.[1]

Communism was viewed not only as the epitome of a secularized economics, but it was a serious challenge to the Christian faith because it gave purpose to life and significance to history.[2] Men were being called upon to give their energy and aspirations to a reality greater than themselves. This was the secret of its power and the essence of its challenge to Christianity.

With the mounting prospects of war in Europe, Reckitt rejected the pacifist line and insisted that under certain circumstances the Church could legitimately lends its approval to war. It could never be a blind blessing of purely nationalistic interests: "If a war is to be accepted as justifiable and morally unavoidable by the Church, it should be precisely not as a 'national effort,' but as an objectively valid enterprize to which any community implicated in a similar situation would be equally summoned."[3] The Church might even have the duty to say that another

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "The Challenge of Communism to Christianity," Christendom, Vol. VI (March, 1936), p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 43.

[3] Ibid., Vol. VI (June, 1936), p. 88, "If War Comes: The Duty of the Church."

nation was right and its own government was wrong. Reckitt thought this would require more courage than the "proclamation of abstract pacifist principles."[1]

By December of 1936, Reckitt realistically predicts a war on Germany's eastern frontiers and precisely forecasts an attack on Czechoslovakia by 1938.[2] In the face of this likely possibility, we see in Reckitt one of the finest examples of his realism. Some Bishops and others were suggesting the need for more goodwill and forgiveness so that a 'new spirit' could infuse world affairs and miraculously solve all problems. "It is incumbant upon others not less persuaded of the relevance of Christianity to counter with a little objective realism."[3] And counter he does with one of his most penetrating insights into the nature of the Church and her role in society:

> For the Church to exort to virtuous emotions in relation to a situation the evil and falsehood of which remains undiagnosed, and bid the very men who have produced this situation to come together to contemplate it without giving them any guidance or suggestions as to how their unchallenged hypothesis have led them to the dilemmas that confront them, is to doom religion to futility, and make its claims appear to the world outside as even more empty and pretentious than it is already tempted to regard them.[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., Vol. VI (Dec., 1936), p. 243, "Christianity and the Next War."

[3] Ibid., p. 244.

[4] Ibid., pp. 244-245.

We have already noted Temple's reluctance to identify the Church with a particular secular cause for fear that it might eventually be proven wrong and the position of the Church compromised. Reckitt has less fear of this possibility and suggests that the Church ought to give its guidance and aid to valid secular causes without fear of compromising its spiritual mission.[1] What the Church must guard against is accepting a purely secular hypothesis upon which action is being taken. He rejects any antithesis between the sacred and the secular but does make allowance for an "autonomy of means," while the Church can never be silent about ultimate purposes.[2]

Reckitt is also less rigid and legalistic in his views of marriage and divorce. He does not want to deny the "Possibilities of consolation which divorce may offer to some of those who have fallen--or drifted--into an unhappy marriage," but he maintains "that these can never counterbalance the fatal elements of insecurity which its acceptance as a normal incident must import into all marriage at its beginning, and even before."[3] He is prepared to make an allowance for divorce as a possibility but does not want

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "Our Relation to Secular Movements," Christendom, Vol. VII (June, 1937), p. 98.

[2] Ibid.

[3] M. B. Reckitt, "The Preservation of Marriage," Christendom, Vol. VII (Dec., 1937), p. 246.

the Church to accept it as "normal" lest it undermind the basic spirit in which people enter into marriage.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Christendom (1941), Reckitt could reflect on the impact of the thirties and the changes in emphasis which had occurred within the 'Christendom Group.' He notes three alterations in the shift from a concern with constructive sociology to: (1) a concern with theological foundations; (2) elaboration of a radical and essentially new social and economic criticism; (3) and in later years, pre-occupation with the implications of catastrophe.[1] As he looked toward the future, he admitted, "We have still to trace in convincing detail the outlines of tomorrow's Christendom."[2] Reckitt was not only interested in knowing how we got to be where we are, but what was more important, where do we go from here? The middle ages could not preserve their society because they lost the capacity to grow and Reckitt suggests that our modern age cannot grow because it does not have enough to preserve.

Ten years later (1950), Reckitt wrote the final chapter of Christendom's life and influence. As he recalled twenty years of publication, he saw four general phases through which his thoughts had gone. (1) In the earliest years there was a revolt against secular, fatalistic determinism expressed in economics, science and psychology. (2) There

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "Reflections on a Birthday," Christendom, Vol. XI (March, 1941), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 5.

were three characteristics of the second phase in the middle thirties: (a) the appearance of a new generation; (b) articles had a more philosophical and theological tone; (c) the rise of totalitarianism and the prospects of war. Reckitt feels this was his most vigorous period. (3) The highlight of the third phase was the Malvern Conference in 1941, at which time the Christendom group was invited to take a leading part. (4) The fourth and final phase was an attempt to understand and interpret the desperate situation of a war-torn world with its atomic power and the increasing challenge of the Communist world. He concludes by saying that this is the period "in which our little light goes out."[1]

Why had the light gone out? Writing in 1954, Reckitt suggests some of the reasons. "We were, I think, too esoteric; interested rather in satisfying ourselves of the precision of our statements than in communicating the essence of them to those who had not gone over all the ground with us."[2]

In addition, the original fellowship from which this concern had proceeded was largely dispersed. It was the problem referred to above in phase two, the appearance of a new generation. They had failed to challenge enough new disciples to carry on in the struggle.

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "Valedictory," Christendom, Vol. XVI (December, 1950), p. 254.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, p. 194.

What is perhaps the most telling admission is Reckitt's confession that their decline may have been a judgment on them for having failed to respond "to the needs of the latest age."[1] The Christendom movement had often been criticized on two accounts: (1) its emphasis on the relation of man to nature and (2) its traditionalism. Reckitt was aware of the charges but failed to take them seriously or recognize their validity. In spite of their weakness at this point, Reckitt insists that as a group they had never cherished any "utopian illusions."[2]

A final clue to their declining influence was the untimely death of William Temple. His concerns had brought them to "Malvern" in 1941, but the spirit of that occasion "did not survive his loss."[3]

As he looked to the future, Reckitt saw the need for coming to grips with the scientific outlook which was the most characteristic feature of the modern mind. He saw the need for going beyond Christian sociology to "what can only be called Christian anthropology."[4] The future called for an elaboration of the Christian doctrine of man.

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[1] Ibid., p. 195.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 196.

[4] Ibid., p. 199.

III. THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS

Reckitt is in fundamental agreement with Dement's economic views. Both see it as a basic issue and both are inclined to view the medieval Church as offering the clue not only to understanding but to the method of correcting our false economic emphases. The main ingredients of their criticism involve the Just Price, Usury, Social Credit, and the priority of agriculture.

From his sociological perspective, Reckitt has more to contribute in the field of politics. In his autobiography, As It Happened, he tells us something of the movement of his own thought and interest through Socialism, the National Guilds, Social Credit and finally to Christendom. After moving from one particular cause to another, Reckitt finally arrived at this all-embracing concept of a Christian social order as expressed in Christendom. Its political implications became a major concern.

Christians ought first to be aware of the tension which must exist between the two spheres of religion and politics. It is a never-ending conflict between absolute ideals and relative possibilities.[1] There are several ways in which we try, unsuccessfully, to escape this tension. One is to say that religion is private and not social. Another is a "Perfectionism" which avoids any involvement

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, The Christian in Politics, (London: S.P.C.K., 1946), p. 10.

in "worldly affairs."[1] A further attempt to resolve these opposing demands is to either make our religion our politics or by making politics our religion. When religion is turned into politics it becomes an instrument for achieving some desired end. The absolute cannot be used in such a way and remain itself. If our politics become too religious then we have converted our secular politics into the eternal law of God. Reckitt's unequivocal conclusion is that there is no possible way to avoid the tension.

In our previous section, we noticed an attempt to make an allowance for an "autonomy of means." Both Reckitt and Demant are tempted to resort to this as one way of minimizing the tension involved in political activity. Reckitt, however, is more willing to concede that no such clear definition can be drawn between "ends" and "means." "Moreover, the Christian will always be or always ought to be, especially conscious of the 'problem of means,' the need to be ever on guard against the quest of the good by methods which contradict good."[2] There is a recognition that ends and means are related but Reckitt never tells us in what sense there can be an "autonomy of means." "There is an 'autonomy of means' which Christianity must always respect."[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

[3] M. B. Reckitt, Religion in Social Action, p. 50.

As long as he reserves the right of the Church to question the means, he can hardly acknowledge their autonomy.

In keeping with the Thomistic view, Reckitt recognizes that man is by nature a social creature. The state, then, has a positive and divine role and not simply a penal or remedial value.[1] This is why the Christian can never say that religion is purely an individual or private matter. Society, as well as individuality, is a God-given reality and Christians must take their full share of responsibility for the affairs of a state.

What happens then when the Christian tries to function in the world of politics? Reckitt suggests three things he had better keep in mind: (1) A Christian in politics will have to act on secular assumptions which he cannot accept. (2) Legitimate differences will inevitably arise from those who stress order and tradition on the one hand and from those who emphasize liberty and progress on the other. (3) Political 'machines' often function better when the Christian is prepared to 'go along' rather than take an uncompromising stand on principles.[2]

At the point of differences which arise among Christians in politics, Reckitt feels they ought to "unite for consultation and possibly for action."[3] First, they must consider

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, p. 135.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, The Christian in Politics, p. 56.

[3] Ibid., p. 62.

the nature of the problem. Secondly, they must be prepared to defend Christian standards in regard to "mixed questions like Education and Marriage." Thirdly, they must search for that policy which their Christian doctrine of man and society may demand of them.

Political realism is defined as the willingness to accept the historic situation in which one stands and a readiness to act within the terms which it proposes. Reckitt sees the political level of a community moving toward higher levels of responsibility where more and more people are unwilling to run away from the facts. So many 'social idealists' cannot begin where they are because they are preoccupied with a resentment over being there at all. The opposite tendency to accept without question the contemporary scene is equally rejected.[1]

Reckitt's realism is also reflected in his reaction to two major problems confronting the politician. The first is the problem of 'social priorities' where the choice to be made is between two or more 'goods.' Reckitt now suggests in this situation that there is a need for the cardinal virtue of Prudence. Here he reminds Christians that Prudence and Temperance are just as essential in politics as the virtues of Justice and Fortitude. Unfortunately, we are not given enough details as to the precise meaning of these terms. If Reckitt means by prudence, the use of rationality

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[1] Ibid., p. 73.

in determining 'social priorities' then it is difficult to conceive of any manner in which this could be done without reference to some concept of justice. If, on the other hand, Reckitt is saying that these two virtues are profoundly related to one another and the Christian had better keep both of them in mind, then he is affirming their inherent relationship. What he does say is that "the questions that it raises are likely to demand for their solution an exercise of the cardinal virtue of Prudence rather than that of Justice."[1] "Rather than" sounds as if Justice could be ignored or reserved for issues of another kind.

The second, and often more difficult, problem is when the politician faces a choice between two evils. Reckitt now affirms that there are spheres of activity in which the Christian can never compromise his Christian commitment. "If he is a political candidate, for instance, it is his bounden duty to set his face like a flint against hypocrisy, injustice to opponents, false simplifications of complex issues, and all efforts to overturn a rational judgment upon affairs by employment of any methods savouring of mass hypnotism."[2] Reckitt makes room for the necessity of give and take, compromise and co-operation, but only within a framework of choices that are compatible with the Christian faith.

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[1] Ibid., p. 74.

[2] Ibid., p. 77.

The conflict of loyalties which inevitably arises in political life cannot be resolved in advance on the abstract ground of principle.[1] Here Reckitt tends to part company with Demant. As we observed, Demant stressed principles while Reckitt says, "Jesus in His teaching undoubtedly 'revealed principles,' but what He primarily revealed was the nature of God."[2] Reckitt observes that there are some problems which must be solved as the Christian 'goes along' not only mindful of his reputation but also responsive to the needs and desires of those he represents. He goes on to suggest that if a person does not have the inclination to struggle with these problems of conscience, then he had better not enter into politics at all.

Rather than an ethic based upon "principles," Reckitt is prepared to take faith seriously. Especially in the midst of 'secular' events, the Christian who is trying to live 'by the spirit' does not yield to a dogged skepticism, irrational optimism or cynicism. Christians must especially be on guard lest they fall for "a negative faith in the irresistibility of evil."[3] Christians hold to a faith in God which gives meaning to history and significance to man's varied activities. Man is never the helpless victim of a purposeless fate.

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[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, Faith and Society, p. 31.

[3] M. B. Reckitt, The Christian in Politics, p. 115.

In dealing with the problem of power, Reckitt refers to it as a "complement of Love for sinful man."[1] Christians must never suppose that, in the maintenance of human order, they can eliminate the state as an organized power. The Communists labor under this illusion. They justify their ruthless use of power with the fantasy that their descendants will be able to do away with it. "The real problem of power, we should know, is how to devise and maintain a human order in which power and love may co-exist as complementary forces, not in uneasy alternation, but simultaneously and reciprocally."[2] Reckitt thinks others will preserve power and it falls to Christians "to see that love, as it exemplifies itself in tolerance, forbearance, generosity and restraint, is not forgotten."[3]

Let us recapitulate the main points in Reckitt's political realism:

(1) There is always a tension between religion and politics.

(2) Christians must respect an autonomy of means where there is no violation of the moral law.

(3) The state is a God-ordained reality because man is by nature a social creature. It has a positive function.

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, "Christian Democracy," Christendom, Vol. XVI (Sept., 1949), p. 75.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 76.

(4) Christians do not deny or try to escape from contemporary facts in the social order.

(5) In the choice between two or more 'goods,' Prudence becomes the primary virtue.

(6) In the choice between two or more evils, the Christian can never compromise his integrity.

(7) Pre-determined 'principles' cannot solve political problems where this is a conflict of loyalties.

(8) The politician, of all Christians, must live by Faith.

(9) Christians are not discouraged by the inevitability of evil. Human activity under God does have significance.

(10) Power and love have a co-existent necessity.

IV. A CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY

Demant defined sociology as "the objective and dispassionate study of society. ...There is no specifically Christian method of doing this."[1] Reckitt implies that the only adequate sociology is a Christian Sociology: "Christian Sociology may be defined as the study which derives from the conviction that the nature and purpose of human society can only be understood in the light of the Christian doctrine of Creation, and of the Christian teaching about man as at once a personal and social being..."[2] At least for Reckitt, there is not only the possibility but the necessity of a Christian Sociology, while Demant apparently makes room for an autonomy of method in the social sciences. Reckitt concedes that the Christian must respect the material assembled and the conclusions reached by the social sciences but "he can never accept a purely secular approach to the problem of human order as truly realistic."[3]

There are two postulates of a Christian sociology. The first is the primacy of supernatural ends. The second is the rational validity of social objectives.[4] One can see

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[1] V. A. Demant, God, Man and Society, p. 58.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, pp. 178-179.

[3] Pearcy Dearmer, Editor, Christianity and Crisis, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933) Chapter by Reckitt, "Industrial Secularism," p. 557.

[4] Ibid.

how the first has decidedly Christian implications. The second is not so obviously Christian and Reckitt does not tell us why he makes it a presupposition of Christian sociology. Nor does he tell us how rationally determined social objectives can either be isolated from or related to supernatural ends.

A Christian sociology is concerned with more than personal reformation. Its purpose is social redemption. It authenticates those standards by which the social order becomes the legitimate sphere in which God's will for reason, justice and love can be expressed.[1] A Christian social order is defined as "an order of human activities, each of which stands to the others in a position of organic relationship according to a definite conception of the nature of man and of his spiritual end, here and hereafter."[2]

In regard to the relationship of the Christian doctrine of man to the insights of the social scientists, Reckitt has several points to make:

(1) The social scientist challenges the Classical and Renaissance view of man more than he does the Christian view. The flaws in man discovered by the social scientist are recognized by the Christian as deriving from an inherent defect in his nature--'original sin.'

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[1] Ibid., p. 556.

[2] M. B. Reckitt, "Some Issues for Christian Sociologists," Christendom, Vol. VI (June, 1936), p. 118.

(2) Christian doctrine does not avoid or evade the influence of heredity or environment but it does insist that man need not surrender to such influences. Christians believe that religion can help man to 'mould his circumstances.'

(3) Christian doctrine not only affirms man's uniqueness in nature, but also asserts his finiteness in a universe man does not control.

(4) Christianity insists that science deals only with those aspects of reality about which a valid generalization can be made. The unique and unrepeatable character of the human being limits what the scientist can say about him.

(5) All human activities may have some sociological aspects but the social scientist cannot claim that the sociological fact is the only important one. Reckitt insists that meaning and purpose are beyond the scope of science.[1]

There is a sense in which Reckitt feels that sociology cannot be completely identified with the 'social sciences.' A thorough investigation of society involves a number of non-objective factors. Man is studying himself and cannot stand outside such a study, nor can he measure or predict human behavior in quite the same way as the physical scientist measures his material.[2]

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[1] M. B. Reckitt, The World and the Faith, pp. 187-188.

[2] Ibid., pp. 183-184.

Religion and science, at their best, approach reality with humility and reverence. Wishful thinking is rejected by both. Christian sociology is prepared to accept all the legitimate insights which the social scientist may discover but it must be prepared to say more about values and purposes than the scientist can ever say.[1] Reckitt wanted a sociology that was deeply rooted in theology and, as we noted earlier, a new emphasis on the Christian doctrine of man.

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[1] Ibid., p. 189.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY NELSON WIEMAN

Biographical Data

I. A New Naturalism

II. The Source of Human Good and Evil
   A. The Source of Goodness
   B. The Source of Evil

III. Progress and the Directive in History

IV. Morality and Social Reconstruction
   A. Morality
   B. Social Reconstruction

V. The Ultimate Commitment
   A. Marriage and Divorce
   B. Economics and Industry
   C. Politics and Government

Henry Nelson Wieman

Biography

1884	Born, August 19
1907	A.B., Park College, Parkville, Missouri
1907 - 1910	San Francisco Theological Seminary
1910 - 1911	Universities of Jena and Heidelberg
1917	Ph.D., Harvard
1917 - 1927	Professor of Philosophy, Occidental College
1927 - 1947	Professor, Philosophy of Religion, University of Chicago
1951 - 1956	Visiting Professor, University of Houston
1956 -	Professor of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University

I. A NEW NATURALISM

Henry Nelson Wieman is the only person in our study of ethical realism who represents a divergence from "super-naturalistic" or "transcendental" theology. These words represent so many ramifications of thought that perhaps it is never fair to use them as descriptive generalizations of any man's theology. The label may be useful, however, providing one knows the particular way in which a man is represented by it.

Wieman saw that his own thought was preceded by two main streams of theological interpretation. One was liberalism which brought the empirical method into religion, but it did not sufficiently define the character of religious experience nor did it adequately show how it could be treated scientifically. "If the liberal interpretation tended to cut men off from the throbbing heart of religion, the interpretation of traditional supernaturalism tended to cut men off from the heart of modern life."[1]

Supernaturalism as the other main stream tended to be oblivious of the scientific method as the dominating and distinctive character of the modern age. It went too far in its rejection of reason.

Two new branches have grown up from these roots. Social idealism emerged from liberalism. It was often a form of

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[1] H. N. Wieman & W. M. Horton, The Growth of Religion, (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1938), p. 250.

religious humanism. The major emphasis was on social transformation, hence the various forms of the social gospel.

The other branch, neo-supernaturalism, grew out of the old supernaturalism. The most voluminous and articulate spokesman for the new supernaturalism was Karl Barth.

Wieman refers to his own position as "theistic naturalism."[1] Of course, he views his own thought as having avoided the pitfalls of the two main streams that preceded it. He was convinced that no religion could speak in the name of knowledge to a science-dominated civilization and reject reason as the new-supernaturalists have done. Not only as a matter of apologetics but also at the level of epistemology. He insisted that reason had its rightful place in the religious life:

> Religion rightly repudiated reason in its misuse. But when it has confounded all reason with these misuses it has been in error. There is no way to distinguish between truth and error, or between the high and the holy on the one hand and the mean and base on the other, except by the empirical and experimental use of reason. Reason has its indispensable place in all worthy religion.[2]

To make the claim that some rational proposition is a final statement about the nature of reality is a misuse of reason. Life has many rich experiences which are super-rational in character and Wieman does not say that reason can

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[1] Ibid., p. 250.

[2] Ibid., pp. 410-411.

exhaust these deep, ineffable dimensions of experience. "No man can be religious by means of reason alone."[1] What he does say is that "Reason can be the servant of religion; it cannot be, the sustainer, originator, or promoter."[2] He avoids the condemnation of reason simply because some men have abused it. The right use of it is to recognize it as giving direction and guidance to religion.

Wieman, as a spokesman of the new naturalism, rejects a speculative approach to God. He accuses the supernaturalist of engaging in "flights of rationalistic speculation even though he calls it revelation."[3] He says it is pure speculation to talk of God at the beginning as creator; at the bottom of everything as sustainer; as the highest up ideal of what ought to be; or the far off consumation of everything coming out all right in the end. Wieman takes the "operational approach": and speaks of God as "first of all an actual, existing, operative reality in our midst bringing forth all that is highest and best in existence, far beyond the scope of our specific understanding. He is the creative synthesis at work in the immediate concrete situation where we are."[4] The speculative approach tends to blind men to the immediately accessible activity in which

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[1] Ibid., p. 413.

[2] Ibid., p. 416.

[3] Ibid., p. 268.

[4] Ibid., p. 348.

God is engaged. Wieman concludes that the reason the supernaturalist is involved in speculation is that no one knows with any certainty the ultimate source of the world or its final outcome.[1]

An essential feature of knowledge, according to Wieman, is that one holds a proposition to be true on the basis of good evidence. Belief is holding a statement to be true, with or without evidence. Faith is a commitment to or acceptance of a belief in such a way as to change one's behavior. A belief can become knowledge when there is good evidence to support it. "It becomes faith when it shapes the controlling loyalties of life. Knowledge is not necessarily faith. A man might know many things which do not appreciably modify the directional thrust of his life."[2] Even his beliefs may have no connection with his behavior.

What Wieman is determined to avoid is a concept of faith as an assertion about truth without sufficient evidence. When the naturalist insists that faith in God must precede knowledge of God he is only saying that we cannot know the value of any reality unless and until we have an appreciative interest in it. This is true of all knowledge and not just peculiarly true of religious knowledge. Nor is intuition a special way of gaining knowledge. It is one

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[1] Ibid., p. 268.

[2] Ibid., p. 444.

part of any way of acquiring new knowledge. We gain knowledge by testing a new idea and intuition is one way in which a new idea enters the mind. Reason must then check its validity.[1]

To use the scientific method does not mean that one must do away with what is distinctively Christian or religious. Its use simply means that one has found a more efficient and accurate method of verifying the truth of beliefs which have been accepted as distinctive characteristics of religion. Knowledge must be based on experience but experience does not automatically yield knowledge. Experience may lead one into illusions unless there is some method of ascertaining truth. For Wieman, the religionist by acknowledging the rightful use of the scientific method can avoid making claims to esoteric means of gaining knowledge.[2] Biblical scholars have been using it for some time and Wieman is convinced that it is time for the theologians to start accepting it. If they were prepared to do so, we might move into more areas of agreement as to what constitutes religious truth.

The theistic naturalist is not a pantheist in the sense that God is identified with the totality of nature. Nor, as we have seen, is he a supernaturalist in putting God beyond the universe. He does say that God is within

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[1] Ibid., p. 443.

[2] H. N. Wieman, The Issues of Life, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930), p. 192.

the cosmic whole. "He is one part of it. He is the most precious reality there is. God is here in nature, present, potent, real, intimately and widely operative."[1]

In contrast to Temple's personalism, Wieman says that God is more than personality. "God, then, is not a personality, but God is more worthful than any personality could ever be. God is not nature and he is not the universe, but he is the growth of living connections of value in the universe."[2] Personality is too much of a human characteristic. Wieman sees God as the creative source of personality.

Wieman says there are at least three things which ought to characterize the divine reality we call God: (1) It must be superhuman; (2) God must be the best or highest value there is in existence (man cannot know anything beyond existence); (3) God must exercise "the greatest power for good."[3]

We shall deal more specifically with Wieman's concept of God in the next section. Here we are trying to understand what he means by theistic naturalism; what is his method; and how does his theology and method differ from others.

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[1] Wieman, The Growth of Religion, p. 434.

[2] Ibid., pp. 362-363.

[3] Ibid., p. 350.

> The new naturalism has also repudiated liberal and humanistic interpretations of man. ...It is like liberalism in saying that God and man are united in certain processes of nature. But it is diametrically opposed to liberalism on one point: it holds that man exists for God, not God for man. Also it is opposed in that it gives far larger place to evil in human nature.
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> The new naturalism, furthermore, is opposed to liberalism in saying that actual reality, and not ideals, should command our first consideration. The new naturalism is like humanism in repudiating the supernatural, but it is opposed to humanism in holding that God is not only real but supremely important--much more important than man himself.
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> Still again the new naturalism is like the new supernaturalism in saying that human reason is not what identifies God and man. Human reason deals with abstraction while God's work is that of concrete growth.
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> According to the new naturalism man must approach God by way of values. Values are the data by which God is sought and found. It claims, furthermore, in opposition to the new supernaturalism, that human intelligence can know God. It rejects the supernatural entirely, while the new supernaturalism makes the supernatural all-important.[1]

The foregoing is a rather lengthy quotation but it does sum up in Wieman's own words the differences and similarities of his own thoughts with liberalism and supernaturalism in its various forms.

Two other contrasts may help to illustrate Wieman's divergence from the supernaturalists. One is in the use of myth. It does not give us some kind of super-rational

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[1] Ibid., pp. 456-458.

knowledge. It simply deepens our emotional and imaginative response to some truth our minds already know. The other difference is in the false use of paradox. It is not a means of stating rational truth which falls into self-contradiction. It does not really transcend the implications of logical consistency. "It is simply a short cut method of stating truth without taking the time to run through all the network of fine distinctions and logical connections which form the rational structure of the truth involved."[1]

Reason and the scientific method, for Wieman, imply the use of analysis, observation, inference, prediction, experimentation, and logical coherence. There are many sources for the data from which man discerns knowledge and the religionist, of all people, must beware of making unwarranted claims for something which is not knowledge or beyond knowledge.

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[1] Ibid., p. 432.

II. THE SOURCE OF HUMAN GOOD AND EVIL

A. THE SOURCE OF GOODNESS

According to Wieman, there are six main variations in answer to the question, "Where and what is value?" Two of them are subjective in that they locate value in the mind of man or the mind of God. Two other answers are transcendental: value is found in an abstract eternal essence, or it is a concrete but transcendental reality. The final two are "contextual" theories of value: it is found in a comperatively simple context of mind and object or in a more complicated context called a "situation." The entire universe does not have to be considered in any particular context but one must be aware of the unlimited possibilities of interrelated events.[1]

The key concept in Wieman's thought is the "creative event." Both his theology and his ethics are concerned with an understanding of and participation in the creative process.

> We shall try to demonstrate that there is a creative process working in our midst which transforms the human mind and the world relative to the human mind. ...Throughout the writing that follows we shall take as our guide the creative event, which produces qualitative meaning.

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[1] H. N. Wieman, The Source of Human Good, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 5.

> Qualitative meaning, as we shall consider it, is created good. But there is a prior kind of good here called creative, which alone is the source of life's abundance.[1]

The values produced by the creative event are not the result of human intention or effort. What is often required is a change of human intentions. Man cannot manipulate the event to his own ends but rather he must give himself over to the transforming power of the creative event. Here is a sense in which Wieman can speak of transcendence. It is "functional" and not "metaphysical" transcendence. "It is not transcendent in the sense of being nontemporal, nonspatial, and immaterial. It can be discovered in this world by proper analysis."[2] The element of mystery is there too, if one means no more than the unexplored and the uncomprehended.[3]

Wieman claims that this creative good is the only absolute good. He means by "absolute" what is good under all conditions and circumstances. He does not mean by "absolute" that it is beyond a state of relativity to conditions and circumstances that enter into the creative event. The quality of goodness does not, however, change with an alteration of circumstances. This creative good is the one kind of goodness which can enter into all relations.

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 77.

[3] Ibid., p. 32.

Creative good is also absolute in that its demands are unlimited and it has infinite possibilities of value. It is an unqualified good and is absolute in that it is completely trustworthy.[1]

When Wieman speaks of creative good as "all-powerful" he means that it overrules evil. Created goods can be destroyed and are in some ways always in the process of dissolution. Creative good cannot be destroyed, it can only be obstructed. The power and triumph of the creative event is within history and not at the end of or beyond history as the neo-supernaturalists claim.

In reaction to the assertion that is often made that Christianity holds "personality" as the supreme value, Wieman suggests that this was certainly not the case with Jesus. The Kingdom of God was the greatest value:

> But the Kingdom of God was not a personality. It was an association of communicating personalities. It could not exist without personalities. It could not even be a recognizable possibility of existence without personalities in existence. But it was not a personality. It was a structure made up of living organisms, physical conditions, and meanings. A Kingdom of God which did not involve physical conditions, living organisms, and meanings is nowhere suggested by Jesus.[2]

This growing good or growth in meaning and value is never simply an actuality or a possibility. It is always a

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[1] Ibid., pp. 79-81.

[2] Wieman, The Issues of Life, p. 221.

combination of the two. This growth is the kind of change which enriches what is, so as to approximate what might be.[1] This growth of meaning, it must be remembered, can only take place in and with human experience. It is superhuman but not supernatural because if it were beyond human experience then man could never know anything about it.[2] But since God includes possibilities he is not limited by existence. Existence in the process of becoming must open up these possibilities of growth in value or they will become a wishful fancy or a purely sentimental ideal.[3]

To leave God out of reality and instead to give one's devotion to a "wishful fancy" might very well mean that God is needed as a symbol to quicken the imagination or stir the emotions. Above all, Wieman is concerned that we not use God as a human utility. He vigorously defends the view that God can only be found and known in actual events:

> Even theology has sought to portray God as a reality beyond space and time, hence in the form of a deductive system like a scientific theory, God so understood can have no intrinsic value; as a deductive system he can merely serve as an intellectual tool for guiding action so as to get more intrinsic value in the only place where it can be found--namely in actual events. According to the view we shall defend, God must be found in actual events. To construct the idea of God

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[1] H. N. Wieman & Regina W. Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1935), p. 51.

[2] Ibid., p. 52.

[3] The Issues of Life, p. 164.

> In order to 'make the world intelligible,' or to provide an effective theory for guiding conduct, is to derogate the divine by treating it as a human utility.[1]

Wieman seldom uses Biblical or traditional terminology. He operates on the assumption that we are called upon to communicate with our generation with the same integrity, desire for truth and depth of meaning which prompted the ancients to speak to their time. One cannot help but ask how Wieman would relate his insights to those of traditional Christianity. For example, how does Jesus Christ relate to all that Wieman has been saying about God? "Jesus stands before the world as the incarnation of the growth of meaning and value which is not limited to any specific form with its limited perfection. He embodies that way of living which strives beyond itself toward the continued perishing and new growth of further forms of value to the end that the infinite possibilities of value in God may be actualized to the maximum."[2]

The creative power was not in the man Jesus although that particular manifestation of it could not have occurred without him. Wieman says that Jesus was involved in it. But the creative event required more than Jesus as an

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[1] H. N. Wieman, The Directive in History, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), p. 20.

[2] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 164.

individual. "It required the Hebrew heritage, the disciples with their peculiar capacity for this kind of responsiveness, and doubtless much else of which we have little knowledge."[1]

With this emphasis on the creative event as the source of human good let us notice how this theological insight leads Wieman into a comprehensive ethical concern for the totality of man's life. "The whole struggle of human life, the basic problem of industry and government, of education and religion, of sex and personal conduct, of family and neighborhood organization, is to provide and to maintain those conditions wherein the creative event can produce the maximum of qualitative meaning with minimum destruction of previously developed structures which enrich the world."[2] One is called upon to give himself in faith to the search for the highest possibilities of value which any given state of existence may yield. To fully participate in the creative process of ongoing events in this way is what Wieman means by giving oneself to the source of human good. The religious terminology for it is God. The will of God when so understood can be discovered only when "faith and intelligent action are combined."[3]

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[1] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 41.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Wieman, The Growth of Religion, p. 480.

Lest anyone accuse Wieman of an undue dogmatism in his statements about God, we should keep in mind one of his earliest writings when he said, "An adequate statement (about God) would have to be enormously complex. Indeed, no man is able to make an adequate statement. Therefore, the statement in the preceding chapter about the nature of God is scarcely more than suggestive."[1]

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[1] Wieman, The Issues of Life, (1930), p. 177.

B. THE SOURCE OF EVIL

From the very earliest of his writings, we can see that Wieman had a very healthy respect for the reality of evil. Religion itself was no exception. It, too, could be infected with error and evil.[1] To miss the true God, by various ways we shall soon discuss, was the worst perversion of all.

Wieman saw human life shaped by two inescapable orders which were antagonistic to one another. One was the ancient order of all animal life and the other was an order of life which communication imposed upon man. It is the conflict of nature and spirit in more traditional language. Because man is caught in the middle, his existence is in a state of "crisis." Life, therefore, calls for an experimental probing of its possibilities which is "painful and costly."

Wieman has two categories of evil: those rooted in the nature of things beyond man's control and those which originate in human life. Evils at the human level we refer to as sin, immorality and demonry.

One of the greatest evils is the elimination of the absolute from our temporal existence. One must keep in mind the sense in which Wieman has used "absolute." Evil in this form "is our inability to distinguish anything as

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[1] Ibid., p. 139.

[2] Ibid., pp. 172-173.

as sovereign over all of human history by right of its absolute goodness, rationally and empirically demonstrated so to be."[1]

The second part of the greatest evil is that man reaches a point where he is overwhelmed by a "sense of the futility of effort."[2] In the first instance man loses sight of God and in the second he loses sight of himself as a responsible personality.

When this crisis is reached, Wieman sees that three ways are open to man. One is giving in to cynicism, pessimism, and despair. The second is an escape to super-naturalistic faith. A faith "without supporting rational and empirical evidence, that there is, beyond this temporal world a 'super-historical reality' which assures the ultimate meaning and worth of human existence despite all appearances to the contrary. This is blind credulity forced by desperation."[3] The third way open is an absolute commitment to creativity: more than human; working in the temporal world; and always bringing forth a higher good.

Wieman is convinced that those who claim that the divine power has the ability and will eventually, in some final sense, overrule evil do not really take evil seriously. Evil so pre-determined to destruction or evil that is

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[1] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 113.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

surrounded before and after by a perfect goodness is not really evil. Wieman accuses neo-orthodoxy and transcendentalism of explaining evil away although they have no intention of doing so.

> Many who thus deny the ultimate reality of evil proudly take the titles of 'pessimist' and 'realist.' They talk at length about the evils of the world and the sin of man. This 'realism' helps to conceal from themselves and from others their romantic optimism on ultimate issues, since they claim that evil must sometime, somehow, be overruled by good. They refuse to face the ultimate reality of evil, and they cover the evasion by means of a vociferous pessimism about this present world. ...
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> The unintentional, yet no less pernicious, consequences of this overbelief, held against the evidence, is that it sickens the spirit. Men drugged with this belief cannot live with power in the face of things as they are.[1]

In Wieman's judgment, if God can bring history to an end and finally triumph over evil then our life is a game and our struggle against evil is a joke.

As we noted earlier, Wieman makes a distinction between destructive evil as the annihilation of created goods and obstructive evil as resistance to creative good. The deepest sin is man's refusal to serve creative growth in meaning and value. "From this sin man is never entirely free."[2] If religion is loyalty to God then sin is disloyalty to God. The sin of disloyalty has four different forms:

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[1] Ibid., p. 38.

[2] Wieman, The Growth of Religion, p. 470.

(1) incomplete loyalty; (2) divided loyalty; (3) no loyalty or indifference; (4) a misplaced loyalty in idolatry.[1] Sin is created good (personality) turning against creative good (God).

Wieman is critical of any attempt to reduce all sin to pride. "Frivolity is no less a sin, and it may be as free of pride as anything can be. The most frivolous, the most indifferent, and the most inert are rarely men of pride. Interpreting sin as pride reveals a blindness to the full scope and depth of sin in human life."[2]

To be conscious of one's sin is the first step in the direction of being delivered from it. The worst enslavement to sin is the condition in which one is not aware of it.

Original sin is defined as man's inability to give himself completely to what saves and transforms him. Every infant is nurtured by human beings who are inwardly divided. Their interaction with the child inescapably produces a divided self in the child.[3] Original sin is not so much biologically inherited as it is socially contagious. Its origin is in both man's limitation and his social conditioning.

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[1] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 148.

[2] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 128.

[3] H. N. Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), p. 133.

Wieman is in agreement with Reinhold Niebuhr on the persistence of evil. In a statement that preceded most of Niebuhr's writing, Wieman expressed an insight which Niebuhr greatly amplified: "Every new state of affairs gives rise to new possibilities of good and evil."[1]

The dynamic, living, ongoing process of man's life forces him into ever new and more creative events. Any premature judgment as to the good or evil in any event may not only create the illusion of virtue but may also prevent the growth of meaning and value in the ever-changing context of events which make up existence. While Niebuhr stresses man's finitude, Wieman emphasizes the unpredictable character of a world in the process of becoming. What it will become is, at this moment, beyond our knowing.

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[1] Wieman, The Issues of Life, 1930, p. 13.

III. PROGRESS AND THE DIRECTIVE IN HISTORY

Not only is Wieman a "realist" in his view of evil but also in his understanding of history. If the ongoing creative and creating events are the only reality with which we can grapple in our quest of value, then one can see how Wieman must take history seriously. In our discussion of Wieman's naturalism, we saw how he rejected the traditional view of a Creator preceding time; a creation functioning within time; and a final consumation beyond time. With a world view based on the philosophies of Henri Bergson, John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead,[1] he points to a divinely creative power which is always in process of creating in unpredictable and unforseeable ways new values. Wieman develops a concept of "emergent evolution" within the framework of a contextually creative view of reality.

History is not moving toward some pre-determined end. "History has no direction in the sense of a working together of all events to produce any kind of consequence either, constantly or progressively or eventually; but it might have a directive pointing out the way that would be best for all people if they followed it together."[2]

Wieman proceeds to tell us what he means by a "directive in history":

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[1] Wieman, The Directive in History, p. ix.

[2] Ibid., p. xvii.

> It is the progressive creation of a qualitative meaning beyond any known limit. It is the continued creation of man, his mind, his world, his society, so that quality--the ultimate nature of reality--can be presented to conscious appreciation in forms more varied, vivid and abundant. ...Such a way of life is vastly complex and no single word can cover it; but perhaps love--with all its suffering, joys and labors--indicates the general direction this way of life must take.[1]

Since man's nature is such that he is capable of using symbolized meanings then, according to Wieman, his nature is the nature of history. What creates man is what creates symbolized meaning and history. This capacity enables man to achieve a moral excellence beyond anything else; and also enhances his ability to do more evil. History makes men and man makes history. Man is made, unmade and continues to be made by the creative power running through history.[2]

This particular insight is the unique contribution of the Jews to our understanding of history. They gave themselves to the creative source of all good as they found it in actual events while the Greeks tended to direct their attention to the greatest created good.[3]

Wieman does not believe that progress is automatic or inevitable. In the long, over-all view of life on this planet, he is convinced there has been some improvement.

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

[3] H. N. Wieman, Now We Must Choose, (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 214.

"But we have stated what we understand good to be and, with this understanding, the world has certainly been growing better. To be sure, not every year and not inevitably does good increase; but since our planet began to cool and the first specks of life appeared, qualitative meaning has certainly increased."[1]

When Wieman speaks of the "growth" in meaning, he does not mean that the whole universe has moved upward toward greater value. There are some areas of existence which have shown signs of development toward richer value while some others have degenerated and still others give no evidence of any change one way or the other.

If and when progress does occur at the individual and social level, Wieman suggests that there must be some progression in the following:

> (1) Widening the upper levels of the social hierarchy to include more of the people, (2) increasing the diversity of intercommunicating individuals and groups, (3) each apprehending more of the meaning which others have to communicate, and (4) each integrating more of this communicated meaning into his own life and personality.[2]

A combination of these will be a necessity in any form of social progress. The possibility of their occurring will be increased as man moves more and more into a new era of

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[1] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 89.

[2] Ibid., p. 123.

deliberate history making. As man consciously reshapes his basic social institutions, he is deliberately guiding history into new directions.[1]

Progress is possible but one does not have any assurance that what is gained will be maintained. Creative events always have the possibility of becoming distorted or reversed. "Good that grows is constantly being destroyed. ...The evil of destruction is increasing all the time, but that is only because there is more of good to be destroyed."[2] Man's tendency to give himself to some created good becomes the chief stumbling block to progress. As he commits himself to the divine creativity, man responsibly participates in the ever emerging evolution of history toward unknown and unpredictable possibilities of greater value and greater evil.

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[1] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 520.

[2] Wieman, The Growth of Religion, p. 339.

IV. MORALITY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

A. MORALITY

With Wieman's emphasis on the creative event, we see the background for a new naturalism and a "contextualist" ethic. Religion at its best encourages and inspires this intense quest for the highest possibilities of value which can be found in any particular set of circumstances. The very creation of personality itself depends upon the extent to which men are prepared to continually give themselves to this creativity from which values and created goods emerge. If man ever settles for some known created value, he will close the door to any further growth in value which the very ongoing process of new situations will demand. "The will of God is the creative synthesis of each unique situation."[1] This is a concept of the Kingdom of God as an ever present reality and not a future utopia within history or a triumph of God's rule beyond history.

When the individual stands at the point of making a decision he must often choose one good as over against another good. The rejected good may be a source of anxiety and pain. Whatever good is chosen is not perfect because one simply moves into a new context of relationships which make any previously chosen good relative to other possibilities. There is an element of evil in every situation,

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[1] Ibid., p. 283.

if it is nothing more than the necessary rejection of some good.[1] In this sense, there is an uncomprehended goodness and evil emerging in every situation and it is only after one has had the time and sensitized perception to look back that he may ever be aware of his participation in the creative event.

Wieman insists that his theory of morality is neither utilitarian nor categorical. He rejects the naturalistic and non-naturalistic classifications of W. D. Ross wherein the former is based on the "foreseen consequences of happiness" and the latter is based on obligatory principles regardless of consequences. Moral conduct demanded by the creative event is not determined by either of these categories.[2]

> Morality is not religious when practiced as though the moral order were an end in itself. Neither is it religious when practiced as a means of producing desired consequences of value foreseeable in their specified nature. It is not religious when the sense of obligation is derived from any of the sources noted above except only creative power (will of God).[3]

When morality becomes religious then the moral law is no longer supreme but it becomes a servant of the creative event. The moral law and moral principles become subject to criticism and revision not simply in regard to human desires

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[1] Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 74.

[2] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 225.

[3] Ibid., p. 227.

but in keeping with the demands of creative good. Moral principles are not really moral if by them we completely reject or defy the world as it actually is. Wieman is a thorough going "realist" because his theory of morality is prepared to deal with actual circumstances which confront men in their moral decisions. "Conformity to moral principles in the abstract, 'personal exemplification of moral principle' in opposition to actual conditions is moralism."[1]

Wieman suggests that one of the worst forms of evil derived from "conventional" morality is its identification with the true moral law. What is the demand of the moral law as a guide to the creative event? "Act so as to meet the conditions required for the progressive transformation and creation of the world by conjunctions that expose to appreciative awareness more of the depth and richness of quality, which is the reality of all existence."[2]

Conduct is moral when it provides the most favorable conditions for "the creative transformation of man both as an individual, as a society, and also as development throughout history."[3] When the required knowledge is inaccessible then the intention so to act is morally right.

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[1] Ibid., p. 230.

[2] Wieman, The Directive in History, p. 71.

[3] Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 110.

Wieman rejects the abstract ideal apart from actual existence as neither a greater good nor a guide to greater good. Creativity transforms the individual, his ideals and the situation. "Since creative interchange improves the ideal as well as the concrete situation, it is the guide to greater good and not the ideal."[1] Is it legitimate to ask whether creativity and its demands can become an ideal? Wieman insists that ideals themselves emerge from a creative event. But the creative character of an event may very well have depended on the ideal which motivated a person. Wieman agrees that ideals are better "when they inform us more accurately concerning those features by which to identify concrete situations which will be better than the present when they are actualized."[2]

A further question arises. Does not every ideal have some element in it which is "apart from actual existence?" This is one quality which makes it an ideal. Yet Wieman says that "the ideal in abstraction and apart from an actual existing situation is neither a greater good nor a guide to the greater good."[3] If it is not in some sense apart from

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[1] Ibid., p. 113.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

from actual existence then is it still an ideal? Wieman has defined God as not only including the actual but also the possible.[1] What is the relationship of an ideal to the possible?

[1] Wieman, The Issues of Life, p. 221.

B. SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

There are a number of reasons why Wieman is not altogether convinced that social reconstruction can be undertaken by institutional religion or, in particular, the church. Among them: (1) The church is a cross-section of society and there is no commonly held understanding of political and economic problems. If social reconstruction were its primary aim it would be political and not religious. (2) The church has traditionally been the champion of the values of the established order. (3) Because religion nourishes deep and powerful sentiments it is not receptive to radical change. (4) Most of the major religions are engaged in a form of thought and life insulated from the rest of the world. The institution is often determined to preserve and strengthen its "segregated" way of life rather than change the prevailing social order.[1]

The church has tried several methods of improving society but they should not be confused with social reconstruction. It has tried to improve society by "changing individuals." Wieman agrees that this is important and must continue but even if men are "won to Christ" there must be some changes in the social system itself or the falsely organized and coordinated institutions will crush the best

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[1] Ibid., pp. 216-218.

intentions of the saints.[1] Here he has anticipated a theme which Reinhold Niebuhr amplified in "Moral Man and Immoral Society." (1932)

Through the "Social Gospel" the church sought the good society by teaching and preaching the "principles of Jesus"; by passing better laws; and fighting certain evils. But it did not go deep enough. It encouraged the church in areas beyond its competence.

Social reconstruction cannot be the primary aim of the church because that would make it a political institution. What is the proper role of religion in regard to social change?

> Out of creative religious groups will undoubtedly come some individuals who will lead in the work that is political. But the religious function of those groups is not to plan and execute the work itself. Rather it is to develop a form of religion having that philosophy, providing that fellowship, and gathering that heritage of meditation and insight which will enable religion to function in political transformation with the needed correctives, and so save it from the evils of demonic religion.[2]

Wieman is convinced that social reconstruction can come only out of a proper coordination of religion, political action, industry and the social sciences.[3] The place of political action will be discussed in the next section.

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[1] Ibid., p. 225.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 242.

The "redemptive process" for society demands a basic reshaping of institutions, ideals and customs in the direction of creating a basis for mutual support and growth in depth of meaning.

The weakness of the social sciences could be helped by the right kind of religion. Their problems are: (1) They try to be morally neutral. (2) The difficulty of impartiality. (3) Their tendency to be committed to a particular social order. (4) The problem of inspiring support for projects that are scientifically oriented. Wieman proceeds to show how his own religious insights could resolve some of these dilemmas.[1]

We must now look into some of the practical implications of Wieman's theology in areas most often in need of social reconstruction.

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[1] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 527.

V. THE ULTIMATE COMMITMENT

A. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The ethics of marriage and divorce is nowhere treated in length or depth. Wieman does frequently deal with those values which can and should emerge from wholesome human association. Their achievement may very well determine the success or failure of marriage. Some of those essential values are: (1) mutual self-expression and mutual appreciation; (2) integration of visions; (3) mutual self-knowledge; (4) renewal of zest and courage for living; (5) glorification of the joys and triumphs of life; (6) transmutation of evil; (7) co-operative devotion to a common cause.[1]

Wieman rejects completely the claim that sexual infidelity is the only justifiable ground for divorce. The basis of marriage is personal affection and not sex. It may very well be one of the most important ingredients in that deep relationship which marriage provides, but it is only one element and not the ultimate foundation upon which marriage is built. "The chief thing is an all-inclusive system of community in personal affection with sex as one component."[2] In Wieman's judgment the chief cause for the

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[1] Wieman, The Issues of Life, pp. 46-55.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

dissolution of a marriage "would be the failure to achieve any community of vision."[1]

Wieman's rejection of any specific rules for the determination of right or wrong in any particular situation saves him from an unyielding legalism. He does have guiding principles but they are so flexible and open to interpretation that one can only apply them to each particular occasion with its unique context of related events. As we have observed, even the principles must be subjected to further testing and, if need be, alteration in the light of existing conditions. Because of the intensely personal character of marriage, there is even less need for the imposition of impersonal principles.

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[1] Ibid., p. 63.

B. ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY

Many factors are involved in that environment which shapes, supplies or denies our needs; but the economic system is basic to all of them. Education, family life, government, and even our spiritual values ultimately depend upon the satisfaction of those basic needs which sustain life at the biological level. Wieman does not mean to imply that the economic interests must be the supreme and determinative loyalties of man's life. Men may not live any more creatively with each other when they possess a sufficient supply of goods and services than when they are insufficient.[1]

Men live in healthy social relations on the basis of what Wieman calls a "cultural matrix." It can be defined as "the impulses, habits and interests, memories, hopes and fears, deeply imbedded in the psychosomatic substance of each individual. It is internal to each individual and it is also the structure of relatedness by which different individuals and groups are connected in mutual support with one another."[2] It is that set of mutually accepted purposes and activities wherein the individual is sustained by the other members of the society as they pursue their goals.

If a new and powerful technology becomes a dominant force in society then the cultural matrix will have to undergo those changes which help men to adjust and become

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[1] Wieman, The Directive in History, p. 126.

[2] Ibid., p. 120.

receptive to the new forces at work on their environment. With science, technology and the machine as dominant features of our society, the problem is to reshape the cultural matrix in such a way as to support man's constructive activity in association with his fellows and the materials with which he works.

Among other things, Wieman sees the ruling imperative of our time as full production and full employment. With this must go an increasing amount of initiative and responsibility assigned to industrial workers. "To develop this it is necessary that the workers engage in thought and discussion, in planning and co-operative action, dealing with the industrial problems in which they are engaged."[1] The new thrust of the cultural matrix must emerge from within industry. It must come through voluntary and freely chosen methods of cooperation and not be arbitrarily imposed by a monolithic government. This matrix of mutually sustaining personalities can "give to industry the nobility and beauty that a corresponding matrix gave to the ruling imperatives of knighthood and Holy Church in the twelfth century."[2]

The technological revolution has brought the world together in many ways but the need now is the development of a sense of community within industrial life so as to prevent

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[1] Ibid., p. 124.

[2] Ibid.

men from destroying each other. The whole political structure must be erected on the foundation of a cultural matrix which is geared to the need of an industrial society.

It is interesting to note how Wieman disagrees with Demant in his receptivity to the necessity of social change required by the industrial revolution. Where Demant saw it as a threat and tended to want a reversal to some previously known state of affairs, Wieman views the present climate as a challenge to the ingenuity and intelligence of man in the creative possibilities of a new order. They are in agreement, however, in that they both insist on the development of the pre-political or sub-political areas of life. Both want to re-shape the culture. What to do and how to do it seems to be the area of disagreement.

The economic order can be seen from two different perspectives. In the first the economist or expert tends to view it in its autonomy as though it were primarily concerned with production and distribution of goods. The other view, held by the humanist, moralist and religionist, tends to see economics as one part of the larger problem of meeting the needs of men and so ordering life in a way to make the most of it. Wieman insists that the second view cannot ignore the internal problems of industry and business--that is, the rules by which the game is played.[1]

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[1]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, pp. 205-206.

But the autonomy, for example, of a corporation is not completely independent of a number of other factors which are essential to its continued existence. It depends "(1) upon profits continuing for many decades if not generations, (2) upon social conditions favorable to its operations when these conditions depend upon its own conduct, (3) upon a reputation and goodwill in the public mind acquired after many years of good behavior, (4) upon the intelligence, loyalty, imagination, and energy of its own plant community built up through many decades, (5) upon the cooperation of powerful labor unions."[1]

Another feature of our developing economic system (Wieman is referring primarily to the U.S.A.), is the shift of control from the owner to the manager. "The chief task of the manager at all levels from foreman to chief executive is to communicate and motivate."[2] It therefore falls upon management to maintain employment; motivate men to faithful and competent work; provide objectives which others can adopt, judge and, to some extent, control; sustain political democracy; and maintain the goodwill of the public. If these are not done then Wieman fears that a strong government may move in and take control. If it does, personal initiative and the possibilities of creative

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[1] Ibid., p. 213.

[2] Ibid., p. 214.

inter-change will be seriously threatened.[1] Wieman's persistent thesis is that the primary problem of our industrial society is the minds of men and their relations to each other.

The tremendous power that is now controlled by industrialists and labor unions is recognized as a dangerous situation. "Power in human hands is always dangerous."[2] The legitimate question which Wieman raises is whether or not any other agency or center of power would be any less dangerous or more beneficial to the common good. Wieman is a realist in acknowledging the inevitable need for power under human control in any advanced civilization. He recognizes that great power can never be effectively controlled and directed by large masses of people. Here is where Wieman defends the present trend of the industrial system, though far from perfect, as offering the best hope for the future. To avoid some of the abuses of power which might accompany the prestige being given to the managerial level in industry, society must withhold some of the honor and esteem which give power and make a professional class out of the managers. They must become servants of the public good as soldiers and priests are.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 216.

[2] Ibid., p. 218.

[3] Wieman, Now We Must Choose, pp. 54-55.

As the autonomy of industry is inhibited by a number of other factors, so is the power of industrial management restricted and restrained by a number of other factors:

> (1) Competition and distribution of power within every corporation; (2) competition and distribution of power between different forms of industry; (3) the dynamic, innovating character of modern industry which compels management to serve creativity rather than dominate and channel it; (4) the countervailing power of organized labor; (5) the peculiar dependence of modern industry upon the stability and well-being of human life generally; (6) government.[1]

Great evils are always present and need to be corrected but Wieman feels it would be a tragedy to forsake the present course of development by the imposition of excessive governmental power. "Capitalism represents fixation on the established order, communism on an ideal order."[2] An intelligent, to some extent, competitive and responsible use of industrial power in the shaping of a cultural matrix which more fully appreciates the needs of man in his totality is the most urgent demand facing our society. "Hence the matrix of mutually sustaining personalities in industry will spread to other areas."[3]

With Wieman's theological emphasis on the activity of God in the here and now, we can understand how the economic order holds a place of priority as the realm in which God is

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[1] Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 220.

[2] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 529.

[3] Wieman, The Directive in History, p. 125.

expressed or obstructed. "To think of the economic order as somehow outside the center of God's presence and operation in the world, and to think of the church and school as somehow more fully representing the work of God, is a great error. The chief battleground between good and evil is at the heart of the economic order and there the battle must be won or lost."[1] God is in the economic process because here more than anywhere else men are bound together in a context of interdependence and mutual support. Another way in which God is operative in the economic order is by "Keeping cherished values and interests of men bound fast to actual reality." Even the value of dreaming is good only when it imaginatively explores the possibilities that are inherent in the actual process of existence. Wieman suggests that unrelated dreaming may go on in art, politics, religion, and family life, but in economics "men must make connection with hard reality."[2]

Further, God is in the economic order because it has developed to the point where men can find some release from the ancient struggle to produce enough goods for existence. God is engaged in the economic order to liberate men for these more creative cultural pursuits: family, fellowships, education, politics, art, science and philosophy. The virtue of the economic system is that it brings us into contact with

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[1] Wieman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 124.

[2] Ibid., pp. 533-534.

reality and, on the other hand, releases us from the burdensome character of that reality by providing the time and means to develop the whole man.[1]

In the light of this way in which the divine creativity is at work in the economic activities of man, what is the role of institutionalized religion?

> (a) The church...must awaken men's loyalty, love and sensitivity...so that their economic striving will be corrected, inspired and directed by the intimate sense of this divine presence at work shaping history through these activities.
>
> (b) The church must develop criteria which will enable men to know when their economic striving runs counter to the working of God in this field of endeavor.
>
> (c) It can help direct the time and energy which the economic process is progressively releasing from industrial production.[2]

Wieman does not see the church as an economic or political pressure group. Its main function is not to achieve social reconstruction by becoming another center of social power trying to balance off other structures of power. In his view, the primary function of the church is to instruct and inspire. The total task of social reconstruction will be achieved through the cooperation of religion, political action, the social sciences and industry.

These forces must now make their respective contributions in the reshaping of the cultural matrix from within the economic order as the dominant force in our technological age.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 535.

C. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Because we do not know with any finality the precise nature of the required political order, according to Wieman, we must have the kind of system in which human plans and controls can be committed to that creativity which prevails when men and groups try to interpret to each other their conflicting interests.[1] Wieman is convinced that only democracy can provide the necessary framework. The particular forms a democracy may choose could very well be wrong but it is only within a democratic process that wrongs can be helpfully righted and a new direction achieved.

There are three major problems confronting democracy: "disruptive interdependence, destructive idealism, and centralization of control in business and industry." In the first instance we have the difficulty of maintaining the balance between community and liberty. To achieve community without liberty is as dangerous as liberty without community. The danger in idealism is in the necessarily abstract character of ideals and when they become the supreme guide they inevitably ignore some elements involved in actual existence. The third problem is the tendency of any group to usurp and abuse its position of power. This is increasingly the danger involved in the centralization of power in business and industry.[2]

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[1] Wieman, Now We Must Choose, p. 14.

[2] Ibid., pp. 40-57.

Wieman defines democracy as "society organized to enrich and empower the individual."[1] Social life inescapably imposes limitations upon the individual but men, in a democracy, must always try to conceive and administer these controls in such a way as to sustain the growth of individuality.

Democracy is always challenged by these two fundamental tasks:

> (1) It must bring individuals to that level of maturity where they will see and appreciate and be committed to that supreme good of human life to be gained through conflict when held subject to the mutual interpretation of the conflicting interest. (2) It must develop policies and an organization which can search out more vigilantly than ever before all important interests which are operative in the society, bring them as completely as possible to organized self-expression, and then provide agents and instruments for interpreting the demands of each to the other.[2]

It is obvious that no political power or government can accomplish these things by itself but it can provide the kind of climate in which the necessary social forces can function; i.e. religion, education, the arts, science, etc.

The first task is basically dependent upon religion and education. The second is the problem of justice. Wieman defines justice as "the distribution of goods and services; the adjudication of claims, rewards and punishments; the adjustment of the consequences of public action affecting the

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[1] Ibid., p. 58.

[2] Ibid., p. 65.

interests of different people--all of these according to a guiding principle."[1] The major difficulty has been in finding the guiding principle. Wieman rejects natural law as a solution because one has not pointed to anything which is open to inquiry. If one holds that it can be intuitively apprehended, then one has the problem of finding some basis from which to choose between conflicting intuitions.

> Distribution, adjudication, and adjustment are just only when they dispense to each individual what will enable him in association with others to enter most fully into creative inter-action with them. For the most part this cannot be determined by judgments handed down by man. Rather we achieve a just society only when it is so regulated that each is free to seek and find for himself what he most needs for the creativity of life.[2]

Creativity is the guiding principle in justice. This means there can be no justice without freedom. Nor, as Wieman declares, can there be any freedom without justice.[3]

He then tries to clarify what we mean by freedom. (1) It is the capacity to anticipate consequences. (2) Knowledge of alternative courses. (3) A valid standard or corrective principle for appraising the good and evil of the choices. (4) The will to choose the better.[4]

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[1] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 247.

[2] Ibid., p. 248.

[3] Wieman, The Directive in History, p. 80.

[4] Ibid., pp. 81-83.

Wieman appears to be going in a circle. Freedom needs a corrective principle, number (3) above, and that principle is creativity. An essential element of creativity is freedom and an essential ingredient of freedom is creativity. For Wieman this is an inescapable circle. Justice, freedom and creativity all belong together. The crucial question is whether or not the circle provides for a continuing process of verification and correction.

How is justice related to love? Justice is concerned with those needs that are somewhat similar for different individuals and groups. Love must deal with those more or less unique needs and complex demands of the personality.

> Love does not transcend justice. Love does not diminish the need of justice. Justice is the indispensable concomitant and intimate associate of love. The two must go together; never in any situation, not even in a perfect world of love or in the most devoted association of two people, can love ever dispense with justice. But love deals with the more intimate, unique and personal needs while justice deals with the more common, public and general ones.[1]

Wieman has not only made a distinction between love and justice as applied to inter-personal and inter-group relations but also between those needs of the person which are unique and those which are more universal.

Our technology and industrialization have brought the nations into geographic and social proximity. The nations and governments of the world must now create a sense of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

community by recognizing the necessity of interdependence. Those governments which openly welcome a creative interchange of understanding and mutual support will control whatever possibility there is for the future of mankind.[1] Uninhibited self-interest will inevitably destroy the social fabric. No one would seriously question such a theoretical statement of the ideal but the problem Wieman never realistically faces is how governments resolve the problem of a legitimate conflict of interests. His insistence upon "good-will" will have an empty ring in the politician's ear because the politician does not always know the particular form of political activity which will best exemplify both his concern for the other party and his commitment to the preservation of historical structures. Here is the weakest link in Wieman's realism. Not that he is optimistic so much as he is superficial. The subjection of the political order to what he calls "ultimate commitment" is far more complicated and difficult than he apparently realizes.

Wieman is convinced that democracy can never command a religious commitment to itself without disastrous consequences. Communism has fallen into this very evil. "It

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[1]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, pp. 229-230.

claims a saving evangel for all mankind."[1] But democracy cannot grow in power and stability without the aid of the right kind of religion. Good government will depend on the extent to which it can be brought under religious commitment.

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[1] Wieman, Issues of Life, p. 141.

CHAPTER V

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

Biographical Data

I. The Drama of History

II. Inescapable Sin

III. Immoral Society

IV. The Impossible Ethic

V. Political Realism

VI. Christian Action

Reinhold Niebuhr

Biography

1892	Born, June 21
1910 - 1913	Elmhurst College
1913	Eden Theological Seminary
1914	B.D., Yale Divinity School
1915 - 1928	Minister, Bethel Evangelical Church, Detroit
1928 - 1962	Professor of Christian Ethics, Union Theological Seminary, New York
1939	Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh: The Nature and Destiny of Man.

I. THE DRAMA OF HISTORY

Perhaps no other person in American religious life has written so much or had as much written about him as Reinhold Niebuhr. This fact is only one indication of the extent and depth of his influence. As even a Roman Catholic theologian has suggested, no one has challenged the "moralistic optimism" of American theology more than Niebuhr.[1] In his reaction to the superficial optimism of many religious leaders[2] and in his response to the pressures of industrial Detroit in the 1920's,[3] Niebuhr took a long hard look at man. He was determined to avoid the partial perspectives of psychology and sociology and found himself grappling with the total behavior patterns of man in search of meaning in history. One has only to look at the titles and sub-titles of Niebuhr's major works to understand his obsession with a Christian interpretation of man in history. The persistent thesis of all his writing is the relation of the historical to the trans-historical elements of the Christian faith.

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[1] Kegley and Bretall, Ed., Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1961, Paperback), p. 368.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), p. 180.

[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic, (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Colby, 1929).

Niebuhr is decidedly convinced that a purely rational historiography can never yield its full meaning.[1] Man may achieve varying degrees of objectivity but especially in his study of history does man, of necessity, take a partial view.[2] Because he is so tied up with himself, it is next to impossible to bring a completely objective mind to the study of man. "In the knowledge of historical events the self with all its emotions and desires, is at the centre of the enterprise; and the mind is at the circumference, serving merely as an instrument of the anxious self."[3]

The meaning of history cannot be rationally discovered or known because, according to Niebuhr, "the source and fulfilment of history lie beyond history."[4] The total reality of history is so complex that man cannot devise any rational scheme by which he can comprehend it.[5] The only sense in which Niebuhr will concede that there is a Christian philosophy of history with some degree of rationality is that we can prove

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), p. 60.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1949), p. 133.

[3]Reinhold Niebuhr, Discerning the Signs of the Times, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1946), p. 13.

[4]Reinhold Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, (London: Nisbet & Co., 1938) p. ix.

[5]Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), p. 184.

the inadequacy of the alternative views. A Christian view is justified on the grounds that it comprehends more of the facts and incongruities of history. "The basic presuppositions of the Christian faith, though transcending reason make it possible to give an account of life and history in which all the facts and antinomies are comprehended."[1]

This complexity of history is further compounded by the fact that human motives are largely hidden and simply do not permit a "scientific" study.[2] Therefore any generalizations we make about human activity are hazardous and speculative. Nor can any such study of past behavior serve as a sound basis for predicting any future behavior.[3]

Because the Christian meaning of history cannot be rationally discovered neither can it be rationally expressed. For example, the Christian faith sees history as a conjunction of time and eternity. Niebuhr is afraid that any attempt to state this rationally or logically will misrepresent the truth by uniting God and the world in pantheism or unduly separating them in a false supernaturalism and dualism. "Consequently the relation of time and eternity cannot be expressed in simply rational terms. It can be expressed only

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[1] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 156.

[2] Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 70.

[3] Ibid., pp. 57-59.

in symbolic terms."[1] But is not all language symbolic? Niebuhr does not show us how religiously symbolic language differs from other types of language. The question is whether religious symbols can be interpreted and, if so, in what terms. Even Niebuhr tries to interpret the "myth" of the Fall. He also attempts to clarify the relationship of time and eternity: "In the Biblical view each moment of history stands under and in eternity but neither exhausts nor fulfills the eternal."[2]

Because historical epistemology has elements of "ideology" and necessitates "evaluational" assertions, we must accept the fact that historical drama cannot be reduced to natural coherences.[3] Further, Niebuhr asserts that there is no criterion of absolute truth in history. All men are in some sense "interested" and in observing the complexity of history no man can "objectively" make a rational statement about it without some biased distortion.

A basic insight of Niebuhr's concept of man in history is that he is a self that must live in a dialectical relationship to freedom and finiteness; eternity and time; grace and judgment; knowledge and mystery; transcendence and immanence; individuality and social responsibility; nature and spirit. The combination of freedom and necessity is what "gives the

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[1] Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, pp. 4-5.

[2] Ibid., p. ix.

[3] Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 69.

realm of history its particular character of meaning and obscurity."[1] This apparently paradoxical predicament of man as both the creature and creator of history is the clue to Niebuhr's thought. We shall see as we go along how his understanding of these tensions serves as the basis of his profound insights and penetrating criticisms. Niebuhr's conviction is that most "philosophical" systems with their emphasis on rationality and logical coherence either ignore or obscure some important elements of man's complex life. Time and again Niebuhr's criticism is levelled at those who are giving some undue emphasis to a partial perspective. This is why his concept of history is so important. "History" is such a comprehensive term that it provides the framework within which the totality of man's life can be understood. Niebuhr has made a number of significant contributions to Christian thought but, in this writer's opinion, his most important and lasting influence will be in a Christian critique of man in history.

Because history is more profound than any rational system can conceive, Niebuhr prefers the Biblical understanding of history as "drama." God may be directing the drama but it is man who is on the center of the stage. In a sense the drama is open to the view of all men, but only in the Hebraic tradition can one see the total meaning of it.

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[1]Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 19.

> It is despite these prejudices, more 'empirical' than the Greek tradition. Its superior empirical accuracy consists in its understanding of the wholeness of the human self in body, mind, and soul, in the appreciation of the dramatic variety of the self's encounters with other selves in history and in the discontinuity between the self and God. In this dialogue, God is not 'wholly other'; but He is certainly the divine other.[1]

This dramatic view of history portrays man as a self in perpetual conflict with God. One of the inevitable features of this contest we shall observe in Niebuhr's doctrine of sin. For the present, we must view Niebuhr's concept of history as forever involved in ambiguities, relativities and contingencies. Man's persistent refusal to accept this state of affairs either by rejecting his finiteness or attempting to overcome the dilemma by his own resources constitutes an element of "original sin" in all men and cultures.[2] This Biblical idea of a source and meaning of life which transcends all human powers represents a radical judgment on the idolatrous pretensions of man.[3] As the self is incapable of fulfilling itself, so is history, without revelation and faith, incapable of yielding its true meaning.

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[1]Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 96.

[2]Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 133.

[3]Ibid., p. 116.

> The meaning of history is not complete within itself. It is completed only from beyond itself as faith apprehends the divine forgiveness which overcomes man's recalcitrance. Thus Biblical faith, which begins with a sense of mystery embodying meaning, and moves to a sense of meaning in history which contains perplexity and ambiguity ends by seeing human history perpetually, and on every level of its achievements, in contradiction to the divine.[1]

Niebuhr concurs in the fullest implication of this insight by completely rejecting all forms of utopianism: "All power in human history is too partial to be good."[2] Here is one of the main fallacies in the Communist interpretation of history--it is utopian.[3] It falsely believes the proletariat is exempt from the evil inherent in all men.

This historical realism also assumes that the Kingdom of God is not a possibility within history. Christians who hope for its full realization in history are living with a delusion.

> Any one who really understands this dimension of the Kingdom of God ceases to have illusions about the world's kingdoms. He knows that their power and the relative justice of their balances of power are not the Kingdom of God. If he tries to mitigate the anarchy of relative righteousness he will not regard that righteousness as the righteousness of the Kingdom of God stands above it and condemns it.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 162.

[2] Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 179.

[3] Ibid., p. 145.

[4] Ibid., p. 183.

Niebuhr makes a very fine distinction in his understanding of the Kingdom of God. On the one hand it cannot be fully realized in history and yet it does not stand outside history or appear in some sense beyond history. "The Kingdom of God must come in history. Yet when it comes it is the end of history."[1] Human society will go on developing ever higher forms of cultural maturity "but there is no final conquest of good over evil in this development."[2] The Kingdom of God is not an eternal realm from beyond history negating time but rather "it is a realm of eternity which fulfils time."[3] As long as we are involved in the relativities, incongruities and limitations which of necessity constitute history, then the Kingdom of God cannot be fully realized. Its full realization would mean the end of history as Niebuhr defines it.

Here is a vigorous rejection of "moral progress," utopianism and superficial optimism. "The moral ambiguity of history cannot be overcome by even the most strenuous moral striving. It is overcome only by God in the sense that the severity of his judgment is matched by His mercy."[4] Any attempt, sacred or secular, to overcome this moral

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[1] Ibid., p. 190.

[2] Ibid., p. 191.

[3] Ibid., p. 192.

[4] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Godly and the Ungodly, (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 136.

ambiguity will be a distortion of the fragmentary character of history by trying to bring it to a premature conclusion. Any form of "other-worldly" escape is equally intolerable for Niebuhr. Christians must live in the world with a sense of responsibility for achieving "proximate victories." Under no circumstances can the Christian faith be made into a system of historical optimism. We cannot reject the victories and defeats of history nor can we accept them as giving the final meaning to human existence.[1] Classical other-worldliness tends to negate the conditions of history while Biblical transcendentalism transfigures the stuff of history.[2] Above all, cultural and technological advancement must never be confused with moral progress. Every new situation only confronts us with some new possibilities of evil.[3] Both man's creativity and his destructiveness have the same roots in the freedom of the self.

History may be the scene of man's predicament but it is also the realm of God's revelation. The meaning of the historical drama is disclosed in a series of revelatory events culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[4] Man involved in the moral ambiguities of

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[1] Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, pp. 111-112.

[2] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 66.

[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1943), Vol. II, p. 161.

[4] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 30.

history is confronted, in the cross, by the judgment, mercy and forgiveness of God. The Christian faith simply makes the assertion that in this Christ revelation man not only gains wisdom but power.[1] God is no longer pure mystery. He reveals his character by showing the divine sovereignty over history in those special events which illumine the meaning of the whole process.[2] The apprehension of this "good news" is through repentance and faith. One cannot observe and know it as a spectator. It calls for commitment.

> The Christian Gospel as the final answer to the problem of both individual life and man's total history is not proved to be true by rational analysis. Its acceptance is an achievement of faith, being an apprehension of truth beyond the limits of reason. Such faith must be grounded in repentance; for it pre-supposes a contrite recognition of the elements of pretension and false completion in all forms of human virtue, knowledge and achievement. It is a gift of grace because neither the faith nor the repentance required for the knowledge of the true God, revealed in the Cross and resurrection, can be attained by taking thought.[3]

Niebuhr does concede, however, that there is a limited rational verification of the Christian faith. First, in a negative sense when one has explored the limits of historic knowledge and virtue. Secondly, there is a positive validation when there is a correlation of the truth of faith with all

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[1] Ibid., p. 162.

[2] Ibid., p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 171.

other truths.[1] But Niebuhr's dialectical mind is at work and what appears to be a concession to man's rationality is soon interpreted as a temptation. He goes on to say that Christians tend to make one of three errors in their attempts to reconcile the truth of Christian faith with other truths. What was shown above to be a positive validation of Christian truth in its correlation to other truths is now held in suspicion. "The first error is to regard the truth of faith as capable of simple correlation with any system of rational coherence and as validated by such a correlation."[2] The second error arises when Christians give undue emphasis to the uniqueness of Christian truth and tend to justify it on purely miraculous grounds--miraculous in the sense of having no relationship to other truths. The third error is the inclination of Catholic rationalism to reduce the mysteries of God into a much too simple intelligibility. Ideally, Niebuhr wants to keep Christian truth in a state of dialogue with other truths. Christianity will be enriched by such an exchange and the total culture will be saved from its "idolatrous aberrations."[3]

Niebuhr insists that every interpretation of history has its presuppositions. He has chosen Christian presuppositions

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[1] Ibid., p. 172.

[2] Ibid., p. 188.

[3] Ibid., p. 189.

and admits in the final analysis that his interpretation is "dogmatic" or "confessional."[1]

The clue to the understanding of the plot in the drama of history is the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross.

> To declare as Jesus does that the Messiah, the representative of God, must suffer, is to make vicarious suffering the final revelation of meaning in history. But it is the vicarious suffering of the representative of God, and not of some force in history, which finally clarifies the obscurities of history and discloses the sovereignty of God over history.[2]

The nature of God's sovereignty over history is further expressed in a paradox: "To make suffering love rather than power the final expression of sovereignty was to embody the perplexity of history into the solution."[3]

In Niebuhr's thought the source, meaning and redemption of history come from beyond history. The crucifixion is deeply involved in history and Niebuhr acknowledges it to be an event in history. But rather than admitting the possibility of history disclosing its own meaning (in the death of Christ), Niebuhr has history transcending itself. Under such circumstances one would have to make a virtue of rational incoherence because he has taken an historic event to illustrate what can happen in history but because he has categorically denied the possibility of history disclosing

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 6.
Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 134.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 46.

[3] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 161.

its own meaning he must insist that history is transcended. Niebuhr has defined history as a "dimension of existence in which present realities can be rightly interpreted only through the memory of past events."[1] If he were really consistent, his definition of history ought to include those special events in which there is a divine disclosure of meaning. If history is defined as a drama in which eternity and time are in a dialectic relation to each other, then Niebuhr should not take eternity or divinity as transcending history. If history is transcended then that which transcends it should not be included in its definition. "History is conceived meaningfully as a drama and not as a pattern of necessary relationships which could be charted scientifically."[2] Yet when those necessary relationships are transcended he says history is transcended. But history by definition transcends certain necessary relationships. It is like defining man as both a creature and creator of history but when he acts in a creative way he transcends himself--but that very capacity for creativity is an essential part of the definition of the self.

Niebuhr insists that history cannot be forced into patterns of logical coherence and yet he is insistent that history must have an ultimate solution. Is he engaging in a delayed form of idealism? But he would insist that the culmination of history is God's doing and not the result of

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[1] Ibid., p. 20.

[2] Ibid., p. 30.

man's effort or the by-product of natural forces. "The culmination of history must include not merely the divine completion of human incompleteness but a purging of human guilt and sin by divine judgment and mercy."[1] Since the ultimate fulfilment of life transcends the possibilities of history then God is brought in as the solution to the problem of man's finitude. "God must overcome this inescapable contradiction."[2] If we do not accept Niebuhr's interpretation of the Christian solution, then there are only two alternatives open to us: "Yet without these answers human life is threatened with scepticism and nihilism on the one hand; and with fanaticism and pride on the other."[3] Here is one of the difficulties with dialectical thinking. It tends to reduce the manifold possibilities of human choice to two alternative views.

In spite of all his realism, Niebuhr insists on having a "fairy tale" outcome to the drama of history. To be sure, it is God who lowers the curtain to conclude the last act but never mind "they lived happily ever after." But Niebuhr's realism borders on historic pessimism when he says, "the dream of perpetual peace and brotherhood for human society

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 297.

[2] Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 23.

[3] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 154.

is one which will never be fully realised."[1] In fact, there is really no hope for history because when God finally ushers in His Kingdom it will be the end of history.

In all fairness to Niebuhr, he may not be as certain of the outcome as this criticism implies. He concludes his Gifford Lectures with what is perhaps his greatest passage:

> Thus wisdom about our destiny is dependent upon a humble recognition of the limits of our knowledge and our power. Our most reliable understanding is the fruit of "grace" in which faith completes our ignorance without pretending to possess its certainties as knowledge; and in which contrition mitigates our pride without destroying our hope.[2]

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 21.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 332.

II. INESCAPABLE SIN

As Niebuhr observed the intellectual climate of his time he was appalled by the apparent optimism regarding sin. Perfectionists and idealists of various sorts thought it could be overcome with a little more education, psychological conditioning or social change. Even religionists were beginning to believe that evil could be overcome as man improved his behavior patterns in the same way he had improved his technological methods. As Niebuhr saw it, his contemporaries were being misguided by a false interpretation of man.

> The real basis for all the errors of liberalism is its erroneous estimate of human nature. The wise men of our day cannot gauge the actions of our strong men correctly because they do not understand the tragic facts of human nature. They do not know to what degree the impulses of life are able to defy the canons of reason and dictates of conscience.[1]

Niebuhr saw that the Christian faith had a paradoxical view of human nature in that it made a higher claim for the stature of men and, on the other hand, took a more serious view of the depths to which he could fall than any other anthropology.[2] The fact that Niebuhr was surrounded by the exaltation of man's reason and virtue may partially explain

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 98.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1941), Vol. I, p. 18.

the vigor and persistence of his emphasis on man's sin. He may acknowledge the paradox of human nature, and notice man's virtue, but the major thrust of Niebuhr's writing is on the side of man's inescapable involvement in sin.

As we saw in the last section, the essence of man is his dialectical entanglement in both freedom and finiteness. It is precisely in the expression of his freedom that he sins because he thinks he has overcome his finitude.

> Man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creaturelliness. Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends he is not limited. ...All of his intellectual and cultural pursuits, therefore become infected with the sin of pride.[1]

Because man is caught in the center of freedom and necessity he tries to escape the pull that is made upon him from both directions. It is from this predicament that the various forms of pride emerge: pride of power; pride of knowledge; and pride of virtue or self-righteousness which rises to a form of spiritual pride which is the epitome of sin because it becomes a means of self-glorification in its most inclusive form.[2]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, pp. 190-191.

[2] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 198-220.

The problem is not that man is temporal, finite, creaturely or ignorant but the crux of sin is in his "wilful refusal to acknowledge the finite and determinate character of his existence."[1]

Niebuhr very decidedly has a change of mind. In an earlier work he has said that "a significant portion of human wrong-doing is due to human finiteness. This finiteness includes both the imperfect vision of human reason and the blindness of human impulse. There are not always imperial or demonic pretensions in the evil which flows from such finiteness."[2] Here Niebuhr concedes the possibility of sin stemming directly from man's weakness, ignorance and finiteness. Within five years he apparently denies this by saying, "this evil cannot be regarded complacently as the inevitable consequence of his finiteness or the fruit of his involvement in the contingencies and necessities of nature. Sin is occasioned precisely by the fact that man refuses to admit his 'creatureliness'."[3] From this point onward, Niebuhr's concept of sin centers around man's pride, pretension and vain imagination. "He pretends to be more than he is. ...Man, in other words, is a sinner not because

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[1] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 189.

[2] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 91.

[3] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 17.

he is one limited individual within a whole but rather because he is betrayed by his very ability to survey the whole, to imagine himself the whole."[1]

Niebuhr goes on to show us how the Bible defines sin in both "religious and moral terms." The religious dimension of sin is man's rebellion against God by trying to usurp the place of God. Man is unhappy with his limited, creaturely existence and therefore tries in manifold ways to become God. This is sin in the vertical dimension where man pulls God down and lifts himself up. Sin at the horizontal level or, as Niebuhr calls it, "the moral and social dimension" is expressed in man's injustice to his fellow men. "The ego which falsely makes itself the center of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its will and thus does injustice to other life."[2]

The foregoing aspects of sin are ways in which man tries to overcome his finiteness. Another sinful trait of men is to be found in his effort to escape the unlimited demands that are made upon his freedom. In avoiding the endless possibilities that confront a free spirit, man retreats by trying to lose himself in "some aspect of the world's vitalities."[3] Sin in this sense is defined as

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 191.

[3] Ibid.

sensuality. "Sensuality represents an effort to escape from the freedom and infinite possibilities of spirit by becoming lost in the detailed processes, activities and interests of existence, an effort which results inevitably in unlimited devotion to limited values."[1] The Biblical view, however, is that pride is a more basic sin than sensuality.[2]

We must not draw the false conclusion that sin is an inevitable concomitant of man's finite creaturelliness. The Bible, according to Niebuhr, will not let us be excused by any of these external factors in the human situation. To be sure, man was tempted and in the myth of the Fall temptation arises from the serpents false interpretation and analysis of the human situation. What the story seems to be saying is that before man fell satan fell. He is, in fact, a fallen angel. He too tried to transcend his assigned state in the scheme of things and to become God. Niebuhr draws two conclusions. (1) The devil is not created evil. Like man it is something he has wilfully chosen to do.

> (2) The devil fell before man fell which is to say that man's rebellion against God is not an act of sheer perversity, nor does it follow inevitably from the situation in which he stands. The situation of finiteness and freedom in which man stands becomes a source of temptation only when it is falsely interpreted.

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[1] Ibid., p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 198.

> This false interpretation is not purely the product of man's imagination. It is suggested to man by a force of evil which precedes his own sin.[1]

Was evil a force which preceded the Devil's choice? Niebuhr does not say. Niebuhr rightfully cautions us about trying to reduce myth to actual history. The creation myth is not an actual history of origins so much as it is "a description of the quality of existence. ...It is true in every moment of existence, but it has no history."[2]

A later and more mature insight into the myth of the Fall is reflected in this passage: "The Biblical myth seeks to do justice to both the universality of sin and self-regard and to the element of personal responsibility in each sinful act."[3] Rather than attributing the false interpretation to the devil or some external force, Niebuhr puts the blame squarely on man who is the source of the false analysis of his moral predicament.

In regard to the inevitability of sin we find another contradiction in Niebuhr's thought. In speaking of original sin, he says that it is not an inherited corruption, "but it is an inevitable fact of human existence, the inevitability of which is given by the nature of man's spirituality."[4] He also regards anxiety as an inevitable consequence

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[1] Ibid., pp. 192-193.

[2] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 90.

[3] Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 112.

[4] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 90.

of freedom and suggests that it "is the root of the inevitable sin which expresses itself in every human activity and creativity."[1] But later on Niebuhr declares "There is no situation in which it is possible to say that sin is either an inevitable consequence of the situation nor yet that it is an act of sheer and perverse defiance of God."[2] First sin is inevitable and then it is not. The sin is "occasioned though not caused by this contradiction in which man finds himself."[3] Man is not responsible for the occasion, the contradiction, or as noted above, the false interpretation, but Niebuhr does want to make man responsible for what he does with them. But sin appears to be "inevitable" when he goes on to say, "Every thought, mood or action which proceeds from the self as anxious, finite, and insecure has some taint of sin on it."[4] Everything man does from his finitude is sinful and yet it is not his finitude which makes him sinful but what he does with it. And yet every human thought or action stemming from his finitude is tainted with sin. It is not his finitude but what he does with it and what he does with it stems from his finitude. If, as

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 12

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 193.

[3] Ibid., p. 190.

[4] Ibid., p. 294.

Niebuhr insists, the Christian faith is not subject to logically coherent patterns of thought then anything is permissible.

A further change can be observed in Niebuhr's earlier emphasis upon the human capacity for self-transcendence as the source of all that is good and evil in life. The nature of that transcendence as reason over impulse is also refuted in his later writings. "It is human freedom in other words, created by the transcendence of reason over impulse, which makes sin possible. Therefore, if man is totally corrupt he is not sinful at all."[1] By the time of his Gifford Lectures, Niebuhr has returned to a more dialectical understanding of sin. It is not simply man's abuse of his greatness but also an attempt to hide his weakness which characterizes his sin.

> The occasion for his temptation lies in the two facts, his greatness and his weakness, his unlimited and his limited knowledge, taken together. ...He stands at the juncture of nature and spirit, and is involved in both freedom and necessity. His sin is never the mere ignorance of his ignorance. It always is partly an effort to obscure his blindness by overestimating the degree of his sight and to obscure his insecurity by stretching his power beyond its limit.[2]

What Niebuhr fails to acknowledge in his later writing is that the process of obscuring both man's greatness and his weakness is a capacity which stems from the "transcendence

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[1] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 91.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 193.

of reason over impulse." That earlier insight is refuted by the case he makes for a separation of the self from the mind. "The tendency to identify the self with its mind is as erroneous as it is persistent. The error obscures the freedom of the self over its rational faculties."[1] Whereas in his earliest works Niebuhr tended to describe man in terms of nature and reason, he now stresses the "self" which transcends not only nature and reason but itself. Niebuhr is frightfully aware of the danger that lurks in the identification of man's capacity to sin with his rational faculties. But to say that this freedom which emerges from the transcendence of man over nature or over himself is not a "rational" process is to simply use an arbitrary and limited definition of "rational faculties." The most serious danger which Niebuhr is determined to avoid is that if it is a "rational capacity" which is corrupted then it is knowledge or truth which could deliver man from his sin. But man "cannot be saved by merely being enlightened."[2] Niebuhr knows that man can use and abuse his rationality for the advancement of his own egotistic self-interest. He can affirm that man is saved by faith and at the same time acknowledge the capacity of man to distort faith. On the other hand, man's capacity to distort reason means that it cannot save him. Niebuhr is in such a

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[1] Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 73.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 113.

state of reaction to the abuses of reason by his contemporaries that he minimizes its place even in his own masterly and penetrating use of it. If one may be dialectical with Niebuhr, there are elements of knowledge in all faith and elements of faith in all knowledge. Faith without works may be dead but faith without knowledge is equally dead.

Niebuhr does give slight sanction to a more dialectical analysis of reason. He views it as the servant both of the self-as-subject and the self-as-agent. He admits the place of reason in the "self transcending itself and the anxious self in action."[1] This moderates to some extent the radical distinction he is tempted to make between the self and mind. This is the problem with dialectical thought, it is inclined to give in one moment what it takes away in another.

Before proceeding we had better observe the relevance of an important step between man's insecurity and his sin. This is the state of anxiety. It is not sin but rather a precondition of it. Anxiety does not inevitably lead to sin because it is also the precondition of man's creativity. Anxiety is found in man because he knows his life is limited and he is also anxious because he does not know the limits of his possibilities: "All human actions stand under seemingly limitless possibilities."[2]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 301.

[2] Ibid., p. 196.

Here again we see a change in Niebuhr's thought. In an earlier discussion of anxiety he is more inclined to identify it with sin: "There is no life which does not violate the injunction 'Be not anxious.' That is the tragedy of human sin."[1] Later on anxiety becomes morally neutral because, as Niebuhr now sees it, both creativity and sin can be prompted by anxiety. Another interesting explanation of the source of creativity and sin is offered: "In its yearning toward the infinite lies the source of both human creativity and human sin."[2] Creativity and sin apparently have several sources: freedom; anxiety (part of his anxiety stems from his ignorance--man does not know the limits of his possibilities); finitude; and a yearning for the infinite.

It is also in Nature and Destiny that Niebuhr makes a distinction between sin and guilt. "Guilt is distinguished from sin in that it represents the objective and historical consequence of sin, for which the sinner must be held responsible."[3] He does not make room for varying degrees of sin--"All have sinned"--but Niebuhr does insist that Biblical religion emphasizes different levels of guilt. "Biblical religion has emphasized this inequality of guilt just as much as the equality of sin."[4] It is obvious to

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[1] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 12.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 130.

[3] Ibid., p. 235.

[4] Ibid., p. 236.

Niebuhr that men who are in positions of political and economic power are more guilty of pride against God and injustice to their fellow men than are those who hold no such power and prestige.[1] It is interesting how some are accused of being "more guilty of pride" and yet there is no degree of sinfulness.

In the light of our survey of Niebuhr's powerful and persuasive doctrine of sin, it might be helpful to see how his thought is in contrast to the "liberal" theology against which he revolted.

(1) Niebuhr does not have so much of a philosophical or theological system in which he tries to fathom the problem of sin as he does an understanding of man as he actually functions within the dramas of history. For Niebuhr the problem is man the sinner and not the philosophical problem of evil.

(2) Whereas liberalism tended to see the fulfilment of man in the possibility of his service to God, Niebuhr thinks this an impossibility. Man cannot so much serve God as come up against Him as the One who is offended. Men cannot really serve God until they have been in conflict with Him.

(3) Liberalism thought man could improve his relationship to God by the improvement of his moral behavior. Niebuhr can only see man's salvation through God's judgment, mercy

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[1] Ibid., p. 240.

and forgiveness as illustrated in the Cross. It is salvation in, through and beyond tragedy. Man must first repent.

(4) Liberalism thought of man's predicament (ignorance, social conditions, anxiety, etc.) as not only a source of sin but also a situation from which a little more human effort could deliver man. Niebuhr rejected any attempt to put the source of sin in external situations and saw it fundamentally as pride--man's wilful refusal to accept his predicament and his pretentious efforts to overcome it.

(5) Niebuhr saw no possibility for moral progress at the social level. There is the possibility of "growth" in technological and political methods but they must never be confused with moral progress. Optimism is no more valid than pessimism. Both must be held in the kind of tension which only the Christian faith can provide.

(6) God, then, does not lend his power to men in the form of moral transformation so much as take the initiative in reconciliation through His love and grace in Christ. Moral improvement is secondary to God's acceptance of sin in spite of our failures.

(7) Liberal theology tried by various means to ignore the concept of "original" sin. Niebuhr restored its relevance by re-interpreting it. For Niebuhr man is inescapably involved in self-love and therefore all his thoughts and actions stem from a "biased" will. The myth of the Fall

illustrates man's existential involvement in sin and cannot be interpreted literally as history or the chronology of sin but as the inevitably repeated experience of all men.

(8) Niebuhr saw through another fallacy of the liberals trying to interpret sin in predominantly moral terms. Along with Catholicism, it allowed for various degrees of sin. Niebuhr saw sin as an offence to God through idolatrous pretensions. "All have sinned." He stresses the equality of sin but the inequality of guilt.

(9) Further, liberalism was more inclined to interpret sin as a corruption of man's rational capacities. The source of man's inability to live the good life was rooted in his ignorance. Niebuhr saw sin as inherent in the self-loving self which distorted reason, nature and freedom. Man needed more than knowledge of his ignorance. The self had to be shattered or, as the New Testament puts it, crucified.

(10) Liberalism's optimism over the goodness of the good was rejected in Niebuhr's realistic rediscovery of the emphasis Jesus had made on the sins of the righteous. Niebuhr saw the "badness" in the good simply because they thought they were good.

We must conclude this survey of Niebuhr's doctrine of sin with a confession that its brevity will have, to some extent, distorted it. Few men in the history of Christian thought have matched the profundity of his thought and certainly no one in this century has spoken so convincingly or realistically of the inescapable nature of sin.

> The good news of the gospel is that God takes the sinfulness of man into himself, and overcomes in His own heart what cannot be overcome in human life, since human life remains within the vicious circle of sinful self-glorification on every level of moral advance. ...The revelation is final not only as a category of interpreting the total meaning of history but also as a solution for the problem of the uneasy conscience in each individual.[1]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 153.

III. IMMORAL SOCIETY

Niebuhr's realism in regard to the seriousness, depth and universality of sin at the level of individual life was in marked contrast to the mood of his time. His reassertion of the validity of an ancient Biblical insight into the nature of man and his inescapable sin would have been sufficient grounds for an appreciative recognition of his remarkable ability. The further insight of Niebuhr into the nature of sin in man's social life adds a unique emphasis to his thought. His diagnosis of man's social sin serves also as the basis for his political realism. As we shall see, when man functions in a social unit he is soon engaged in power structures and political machinations. According to Niebuhr, Christians were simply unwilling or unable to realistically face the issues involved in man's corporate life and without a true diagnosis of the situation their idealism was either hopelessly irrelevant or continually frustrated.

It is interesting to note how Moral Man and Immoral Society was, at the time of its publication, considered by British publishers as not being a Christian book. Daniel Jenkins in his foreword to the 1963 paperback edition in Great Britain (30 years after publication in the U.S.A.) suggests that the fact so few people would think of it in those terms now is a "measure of Reinhold Niebuhr's achievement."[1]

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), p. vii.

If one is inclined to think Niebuhr's criticism is too severe or his distinctions too clear cut then one should remember the prevailing thought at the time he wrote. With that in mind one can more easily appreciate the point he was trying to make and even sympathize with the way in which he made it.

The title is slightly misleading. As we have already noted, Niebuhr is not inclined to view man as fundamentally moral and society immoral. They are both immoral and Niebuhr suggested a more appropriate title might have been "Immoral Man and Even More Immoral Society."[1]

The inevitable and inordinate self-love of man is projected into his group life and in the process his egocentricity is exaggerated. "The larger social groups above the family, communities, classes, races and nations all present men with the same twofold opportunity for self-denial and self-aggrandisement; and both possibilities are usually exploited."[2] The opportunity for self-denial in a national loyalty illustrates the ethical paradox in patriotism in that it "transmutes individual selfishness into national egoism. Thus the selfishness of individuals makes for the selfishness of nations."[3]

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[1] Ibid., back cover.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp.47-48.

[3] Ibid., p. 91.

Social units, even more than individuals, have expansive desires which emerge from the instinct of survival. When those ambitions inevitably extend beyond that valid instinct then the "will-to-live becomes the will-to-power."[1] Because power is essential to survival, social units become centers of power and Niebuhr insists that those groups which have a fundamentally political orientation are more prone to the temptation of making undue claims of self-righteousness and ultimately demanding an absolute loyalty. "Sinful pride and idolatrous pretension are thus the inevitable concomitant of the cohesion of large political groups."[2]

It is the nation which invariably makes unwarranted claims for its values. It makes an absolute demand on its subjects and expects a devotion which the facts do not justify.[3] "Groups tend to be unethical in proportion to the degree of unqualified loyalty which they are able to claim or exact of their members."[4]

What we have in society are various centers of power in perpetual conflict with each other. Within nations and between nations the problem of group relations will be

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[1] Ibid., p. 18.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 223.

[3] Ibid., pp. 226-227.

[4] Reinhold Niebuhr, Does Civilization Need Religion?, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 132.

"political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group."[1] The educator and the sociologist both misunderstand the problem because they believe ignorance rather than self-interest to be the source of the conflict.[2] Group life by its very nature is less capable of rational control than individual behavior. Because of its more indeterminate character it is motivated more by impulse than reason.[3] Such impulses are less subject to moral restraint. Niebuhr is convinced that the persistence of this irrational egoism, especially in man's collective behavior, will insure social conflict as an inevitability to the very end of history. "Conflict is inevitable and in this conflict power must be challenged by power."[4]

Political conflict is often carried on by the use of hidden pressures and threats. When no visible force is used, only covert types of coercion, the superficial observer misunderstands the true nature of the conflict by stressing the moral and rational factors involved in it.[5]

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[1]Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. xxii.

[2]Ibid., xvi.

[3]Niebuhr, Reflection on the End of an Era, p. 34.

[4]Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. xiv.

[5]Ibid., p. xxii.

This inability or refusal to recognize the stubbornness of a power structure in its rejection of purely moral objectives leads to unrealistic and distorted political thought and action. Gandhi was engaging in a type of social conflict, even though non-violent, with England.[1] It is an illusion to think that only violence is an expression of ill-will and non-violence of good-will. Non-violence in inter-group relations always has its effect on the innocent as well as the guilty and therefore Niebuhr insists one cannot apply the ethics of personal relations to inter-group relations.[2] The group is less capable of transcending its self-interest than is the individual. In theory and in practice, the group is more immoral than the individual.

Niebuhr is convinced that the greatest contribution religion could make to political life would be in the understanding and use of non-violent resistance.[3] There is no easy solution to the problem of knowing how and when to use such resistance. It is even more difficult to know when one is justified in using more overt methods of coercion. The issue must be "pragmatically considered in the light of the circumstances."[4] The response may depend upon the

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[1] Ibid., p. 247.

[2] Ibid., pp. 171-172.

[3] Ibid., p. 254.

[4] Ibid., p. 252.

extent to which one has suffered injustices from the social order or the reaction may be determined by the extent of the crisis which prevails in society.[1]

Niebuhr is in agreement with the realism of the Marxist insight that the disproportion and inequality of power in society is the basic source of social injustice. "We have seen how inevitably special privilege is associated with power and how the ownership of the means of production is the significant power in modern society. The clear recognition of that fact is the greatest ethical contribution which Marxian thought has made to the problem of social life."[2]

What Marxism fails to understand is the inevitable tendency toward centralization of power and the need, as Niebuhr sees it, for maintaining a balance of power to keep political and economic ambitions under control. "Justice is basically dependent upon a balance of power."[3]

The Marxist is right, according to Niebuhr, in the projection of his social goal (A more equitable distribution of economic power as a means of overcoming social injustice.) and in his sense or urgency in attaining it. Niebuhr insists that the Marxist is a realist in combining his ethical ideals with a program of political and economic

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[1] Ibid., p. 230.

[2] Ibid., p. 163.

[3] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 26.

action. Where the Marxist is wrong is in his utopian pretension that the proletariat will be immune to the abuses of power.[1] The Marxists do not seem to understand what will happen to the poor man when he becomes the powerful man.[2]

Another mark of Communist utopianism is to promise the achievement of basically incompatible goals such as individual freedom and social cohesion. Niebuhr insists that individual liberty and social harmony cannot be fully achieved in history. The Marxist lives with the illusion of man's perfectibility.[3] Marxists think the proletariat can eventually achieve personal freedom and social harmony without the exertion of political power. They will have to use political and military power to set up the perfect society but once it has arrived then such power can be abandoned. It is this fundamentally religious interpretation of proletarian destiny which constitutes the serious threat of the Marxist dogma. A further mistaken feature of their utopianism is not just the promise of redemption from some evils but from all evil.[4]

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[1]Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 270.
Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 164.
Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), Chapter XIII, pp. 217-238.

[2]Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 130.

[3]Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, p. 218.

[4]Ibid., p. 27.

It is interesting to observe how Niebuhr does insist that men must live with the illusion that they can achieve perfect justice in their collective life.

> It is a very valuable illusion for the moment; for justice cannot be approximated if hope of its perfect realization does not generate a sublime madness in the soul. Nothing but such madness will do battle with malignant power and 'spiritual wickedness in high places.' The illusion is dangerous because it encourages terrible fanaticisms. It must therefore be brought under the control of reason. One can only hope that reason will not destroy it before its work is done.[1]

Here again we see Niebuhr's dialectical mind at work. He criticizes the Marxist for espousing utopian illusions and turns right around to insist that Christians must entertain an illusion to give them motivational power. An illusion is a necessity because without it some truth is obscured.[2] Utopianism is a fault of Marxism and yet it is a necessity for both Christians and Marxists.

A further illustration of Niebuhr's dialecticism is his suggestion that individuals are never as immoral as their social institutions and yet one cannot separate the evil social structure from the moral responsibility of the individual who participates in it.[3]

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[1] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 277.

[2] Ibid., p. 221.

[3] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

One can also observe in Niebuhr's earlier work a tendency to confirm the Marxist judgment that man's social, political and spiritual life is rooted in his economic situation. Niebuhr is basically receptive to the idea that most of our attitudes are rooted in the economic class structure from which we come. Niebuhr illustrates this by showing how the privileged classes tend to promote themselves as the guardians of social peace rather than the champions of justice. Justice is a privilege, for them, to be given and not a right to be demanded. Their insistence on social peace will mean they can go on preserving the economic power which is a factor in social inequality and injustice. If they were to insist on justice rather than peace, they might lose their economic power. Niebuhr says it is interesting to see how these classes cry for peace within a nation but are not so pacifistic when it comes to international relations.[1] The Marxist is apparently incapable of recognizing the extent to which the proleteriat class is also conditioned by his economic predicament. The proletariat is the victim of egotism and vindictiveness.[2]

Most historians and economists would agree with this economically deterministic view of history. The peculiarly Marxist conclusion is a complete moral cynicism and hence a final trust in force as the only solution to the social problem.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 137-139.

[2] Ibid., p. 156.

> Since all cultural, moral and religious forces are 'ideologies,' which rationalise, but do not seriously alter, the economic behavior of various classes, it is assumed that the power which inheres in the ownership of the means of production and which makes for social injustice will not be abated, qualified or destroyed by any other means but the use of force against it.[1]

The mistaken hope of the Marxist is his conviction that a change in social organization will alter human nature.[2] Niebuhr accepts a mistaken Marxist insight when he says, "Special privileges make all men dishonest."[3] It is a denial of his own concept of "original sin." In that context Niebuhr insisted that all men were dishonest, even those without privileges. Disproportions of power and privilege may contribute to the degree of injustice prevalent in a society, but man's inevitable desire to justify himself is a deeper source of evil and dishonesty. "This insinuation of the interests of the self into even the most ideal enterprises and most universal objectives, envisaged in moments of highest rationality, makes hypocrisy an inevitable by-product of all virtuous endeavor."[4]

The early Niebuhr had a strong tendency to agree with the Marxists that our economic position influences our outlook on everything else and economic inequality is the root

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[1] Ibid., p. 146.

[2] Ibid., p. 160.

[3] Ibid., p. 162.

[4] Ibid., p. 45.

of all social injustice. It is not a final truth because Niebuhr understands the self as engrossed in itself as the ultimate problem. A further diminution of his approval of Marxism is seen in his understanding of imperialism as not just a capitalistic peculiarity but a by-product of the desire of every power structure to extend its influence.[1] A later view is that the imperialistic tendency has more than an economic motive. Two other factors are involved: (1) A legitimate missionary desire to extend the fruits of a culture. (2) The other motive stems from the desire for power and glory for nation or race. "These are the resentments which modern Communism exploits, though its theory gives a purely economic interpretation of imperialism."[2]

In one of his earliest works, Niebuhr stated this insight which he developed more fully almost twenty-five years later: "In human collectives and social groups the imperial impulse is clearly the most dominant."[3] As we have just noted, in his more comprehensive treatment of the subject, the imperial impulse is not simply economic in motivation. Here is a further break with his sympathy toward the Marxist emphasis on economic determinism. The immorality of society's interest in itself can have "ideological" motivations which are other than economic.

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[1]Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 26.

[2]Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, pp. 202-203.

[3]Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, (1934), p. 10.

> Marxist theory has become a source of moral and political confusion by attributing ideology to economic class interest alone, when as a matter of fact the ideological taint is a permanent factor of human culture on every level of advance. The ideological taint, the dishonest pretension of universality, which accompanies every partial perspective in history...[1]

Niebuhr's most persistently valid insight into the nature of social immorality is that its will-to-power gives it imperialistic tendencies; aggravates its injustices; and inspires its absolutism.

Let us briefly summarize Niebuhr's realistic understanding of immoral society:

(1) Social groups extend man's egocentricity. Self-interest at the social level is less subject to moral guidance and restraint.

(2) Especially in man's collective life does the will-to-survive become the will-to-power.

(3) The inequality of power is at the root of all social injustice.

(4) Power structures will only yield their special privileges under the threat or use of coercion and force. Justice can be partially achieved through a balance of power.

(5) Social conflict is an inevitable ingredient of human history simply because the "balance of power" is never a static achievement.

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[1] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 112.

(6) Christians must not retreat from the use of force in achieving political ends. The non-violent kind is preferable. Circumstances may demand the more overt kind.

(7) Marxism is realistic in its analysis of history as fundamentally a power struggle. It is also realistic in its unity of a social ideal with a political program.

(8) Marxism is unrealistic in its utopianism and partially mistaken in its economic determinism. Its most glaring error is a failure to understand the economic determinism of the proletariat and their inevitable abuse of power. Imperialism is a universal problem for all power structures--and not simply for Capitalist power.

(9) Marxists are unrealistic in thinking that social change will ultimately alter human nature. A Christian realism will also deliver religionists who entertain this illusion.

(10) The immorality of society is its inability to control and direct the will-to-power. Marxism thinks the power struggle can be ultimately resolved. A Christian realism will accept it as inevitable and seek to restrain its worst effects by broadening the base of social control.

IV. THE IMPOSSIBLE ETHIC

Reinhold Niebuhr not only shattered the optimism of his contemporaries in his diagnosis of man in history and in sin, but he promptly and realistically criticized the cherished idealism of Christians who thought a Christian ethic was not only possible but necessary. In order to clarify the nature of Niebuhr's response, let us look at four recurrent themes in his thought: (1) Christian love at the personal level is an impossibility; (2) A Christian personal ethic cannot be applied to inter-group relations; (3) Perfect justice cannot be achieved in the social order; (4) "The impossible possibility."

1. Christian love at the personal level is an impossibility.

A major thesis of Niebuhr's is that a more rational ethic is directed toward justice. It tries to determine the legitimate needs of the individual and the extent to which they can be equitably met with a minimum of harm to the most people. A religious ethic, and especially Christianity, makes love the supreme goal. Love goes out to help the neighbor without carefully calculating the effect on the rights of others or the needs of the self.[1]

In Niebuhr's earliest writing the issue was the conflict between the demands of love and justice. A later and more refined distinction is made between mutual and sacrificial love. Mutual love is prompted by self-interest because it

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[1] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 57.

seeks a return of the affection. I love you because I want you to love me. Sacrificial love has no such self-regard. It takes no thought for itself. But mutual love does have a paradoxical relation to sacrificial love.

> Sacrificial love thus represents a tangent towards 'eternity' in the field of historical ethics. It is nevertheless the support of all historical ethics; for the self cannot achieve relations of mutual and reciprocal affection with others if its actions are dominated by the fear that they may not be reciprocated. Mutuality is not a possible achievement if it is made the intention and goal of any action. Sacrificial love is thus paradoxically related to mutual love; and this relation is an ethical counterpart to the general relation of super-history to history.[1]

Niebuhr does insist that the crux of this ethical problem is not a truth which is only known in the Christian revelation. It is a common human experience to know a good which transcends the possibilities of history. Men can also know that their neighborly concern is not easily vindicated by historical or this-worldly categories. It is the religious interpretation of the Cross, however, which illumines the full ethical import of it. "For without the latter's disclosure of the relation of God to history ethical life tends to degenerate either into an egoistic utilitarianism which makes self-regarding motives ethically normative; or into a mystical ethics which flees from the tensions and incomplete harmonies of history to an undifferentiated unity of life in eternity."[2]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 72.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

This agape of God, as one sees it in the Cross, is a revelation of God's power over history--"the power of mercy beyond judgment."[1] It is a clue also to the way in which God is related to history. God is involved in history and yet acts in freedom over the structures of history. The Cross, as the highest human possibility, does not contradict God's power but discloses a "paradoxical relation of a divine agape, which stoops to conquer, and the human agape which rises above history in a sacrificial act."[2]

This very act in which Christ, according to Niebuhr, rejected the demands of historical existence did in fact place Him more securely in history. Niebuhr admits the necessity of sacrificial love in mutual love but he is unwilling to reverse the process. What no one really knows or ever will know is whether there were elements of "mutual love" or reciprocal self-interest in Christ's death. Niebuhr then idealizes the Cross by saying it reveals a kind of love which, as a necessity of man's essential nature,[3] is nevertheless an impossibility in history.

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[1] Ibid., p. 74.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, pp. 286-289. Here Niebuhr discusses the "essential nature" of men as having two facets: (1) Natural endowments whose fulfilment are seen in the "natural law"; (2) His freedom of spirit which finds completion in "faith, hope and love." The second facet makes the law of love essential to the need of man in finding his true self in relation to other selves. (footnote continued)

Sacrificial love is incapable of justifying itself on the grounds of historical success. In fact, Niebuhr goes so far as to suggest that such love cannot even maintain itself under the conditions of historical existence. Because history involves the persistent struggle of conflicting interests, there is no self or society which can escape some kind of involvement in them. The key to understanding the divine love shown in Christ and His Cross is this refusal to engage in the conditions of these historical competitions.

> For this reason the ethics of non-resistance as taught in the Sermon on the Mount are in perfectly consistent relation with the love symbolized in the Cross. Modern Christianity is wrong, however, in presenting this ethic as one which might, if generally practiced, become successful in history. It is even more mistaken if it declares that a non-violent participation in all the claims and counterclaims of historical social life preserves the essentials of the gospel ethic of non-resistance.[1]

(footnote continued) Because man transcends himself, there is a perfection he can never achieve in history. The impossibility of actualizing the agape of the Cross meets a need of man's essential nature--his own awareness of possibilities incapable of achievement under the circumstances of history. Nevertheless, love is the law of man's being.

[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 75.

The love of Christ as seen in the Cross confronts the Christian with a perfect ethical norm.[1] Any attempt to reduce this agape to the limits of history is a distortion of it. And, what is even more important, because it goes beyond history it cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. According to Niebuhr, much of Christian theology has made Christ irrelevant by trying to interpret Him as a God-man who meta-physically or legalistically transcends history. If Christ absolutely stands above the conditions of finite historical existence, then men are justified in their response of moral complacency. But all men know to some extent that their moral behavior points to possibilities of perfection which are incapable of fulfilment in history. In this sense the Cross belongs to natural religion. "It belongs to revealed religion because it is not possible, without faith, to follow these implications through to their finer logical conclusion."[2] Without such a faith, man would be driven to the historically limited moral imperative which is prompted by his survival impulse. But man knows that his moral life transcends history and

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[1] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, Chapter IV, pp. 103-135. Here Niebuhr discusses the impossibility of Christ's perfection and the necessity of realistically accepting the possibilities of history. In his Gifford Lectures he has a more refined insight into the relevance and irrelevance of the Cross to those historical necessities.

[2] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 79.

therefore "the perfection of the Cross represents the fulfilment--and the end--of historical ethics."[1]

Any thoroughgoing attempt to make the Christian ethic relevant to history will be inadequate if it does not take into account the sense in which both man and history transcend themselves. It is this claim of transcendent relevance which Christians, by faith, make for the Cross. The great mistake of American liberal Protestantism, according to Niebuhr, was to think that this transcendent norm of historical ethics was a simple possibility. Secular forms of perfectionism, including Marxism, have been guilty of the same error.[2]

> And the moral perfection, which the New Testament regards as normative, transcends history not as thought transcends action but as suffering love transcends mutual love. It is an act, rather than a thought which sets the Christ above history, and being an act, it is more indubitably in history than a mere thought.[3]

It is precisely because both the Prophetic faith and Christian faith recognize that their ethical norm cannot be

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[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] Ibid., p. 90.
Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 122-124.

[3] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 96.

realized in history that they successfully avoid sentimental optimism and hopeless despair.[1] "What is significant about the Christian ethic is precisely this; that it does not regard the historic as normative. ...For the Christian only the law of love is normative."[2] That love is beyond historic fulfilment.

2. A Christian personal ethic cannot be applied to inter-group relations.

Because men have misunderstood the nature of group egoism they have applied the wrong ethical norm to the resolution of the problem of inter-group relations. As we observed in the previous section on immoral society, group relations are more basically political than ethical.[3] Group interests and conflicts represent man in his social life and make political power, coercion and the achievement of justice (an equitable balance of power) the necessities of his collective existence.

> One of the tragedies of the human spirit: its inability to conform its collective life to its individual ideals. As individuals, men believe that they ought to love and serve each other and establish justice between each other. As racial, economic and national groups they take for themselves, whatever their power can command.[4]

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[1] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 106.

[2] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 215.

[3] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. xxii.

[4] Ibid., p. 9.

The goal of a more rational and political ethic is justice, whereas a personal religious ethic makes love the ideal. Love prompted by concern for the neighbor is "ethically purer" than a justice which is inspired by reason.[1] Personal relations are more directly affected by individual initiative while inter-group relations are further removed from the effects of individual behavior. Therefore, "it is impossible to transfer an ethic of personal relations uncritically to the field of inter-group relations."[2]

According to Niebuhr, the great misunderstanding and mistake of "middle class morality" is that it tries to apply the standards of individual morality to the needs of group relations.[3] In doing so it rejects violence, coercion and revolution as a justifiable means of achieving social change. Niebuhr insists that there is no purely ethical ground on which they can be eliminated.

> Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit. The individual must strive to realise his life by losing and finding himself in something greater than himself.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 57.

[2] Ibid., p. 172.

[3] Ibid., p. 176.

[4] Ibid., p. 257.

This explains why political morality is the antithesis of religious morality. Political life is of necessity concerned with self-preservation. A more rational morality stands somewhere between the two.[1] It is in regard to political morality that Christianity is most pessimistic. "Jesus made no concession to the necessities of political life."[2] It is not that Jesus interpreted the Kingdom of God in purely individualistic terms of perfection. He had a social conception of the Kingdom and believed it would be established on earth--an insight which other-worldly orthodox Christianity misunderstands. But Jesus did not believe that man would establish the perfect society on his own resources. When the Kingdom of God comes it will be God's doing. "The grace of God for man and the Kingdom of God for history are both divine realities and not human possibilities."[4]

It was this pessimism of the Reformation, especially of Luther, toward the realm of politics and proximate possibilities of justice which contributed to the triumph of the Renaissance.[5] The Lutheran tradition has never been able to quite overcome this indifference to the demands of culture

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[1] Ibid., p. 259.

[2] Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 214.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 20.

[5] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 161.

and particularly the political order. In reaction to Roman corruptions, Luther misplaced some emphases and the result was an inadequate social ethic.

> By thus transposing an 'inner' ethic into a private one, and making the 'outer' or 'earthly' ethic authoritative for government, Luther achieves a curiously perverse social morality. He places a perfectionist private ethic in juxtaposition to a realistic, not to say cynical official ethic. He demands that the state maintain order without too scrupulous a regard for justice: yet he asks suffering and non-resistant love of the individual without allowing him to participate in the claims and counter-claims which constitute the stuff of social justice. The inevitable consequence of such an ethic is to encourage tyranny; for resistance to government is as important a principle of justice as maintenance of government.[1]

Because Luther made love the supreme ethical norm he avoided the Calvinistic error of Biblicism. Luther's attempt to resolve the tension between the world and God was in the form of a retreat from the demands of history. Calvin erroneously tried to solve the problem with an unwarranted confidence in the applicability of "divine law."

> Calvin's ethical system is pretentious as well as obscurantist; for it gives the Christian an unjustified confidence in the transcendent perfection of the moral standards which he has derived from Scripture and obscures not only the endless relativities of judgment, involved in applying a Scriptural standard to a particular situation, but also the historical relativities which are imbedded in these Scriptural standards themselves.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 201.

[2] Ibid., p. 210.

Roman Catholicism generally had a more sophisticated solution to the ethical problem involved in man's collective life. It had Aristotelian and Stoic concepts of justice and 'natural law' to serve as guides in the formation of a social ethic. Furthermore, it "relegated the perfectionist ethic of the New Testament to the monastery or defined its demands as 'counsels of perfection'."[1]

The corporate egoism of social groups makes an ideal harmony between them impossible. "The selfishness of human communities must be regarded as an inevitability."[2] No political group can ever resist the temptation to make idolatrous and pretentious claims for itself.[3] Niebuhr's earlier emphasis on the radical necessity of conflict in the resolution of socially competitive interests is tempered by a rare note of optimism:

> The fact that various conceptions of a just solution of a common problem can be finally synthesized into a common solution disproves the idea that the approach of each individual or group is consistently egoistic. If it were, society would be an anarchy of rival interests until power from above subdued the anarchy. ...History reveals adjustments of interest without the inter-position of superior coercive force to be possible within wide limits. The capacity of communities to synthesize divergent

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[1] Niebuhr, The Godly and the Ungodly, p. 140.

[2] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 271.

[3] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 223.

> approaches to a common problem and to arrive at a tolerably just solution proves man's capacity to consider interests other than his own.[1]

Men can and do consider interests other than their own and in doing so achieve a measure of social harmony. On the other hand, Niebuhr can say that the "inability of human beings to transcend their own interests sufficiently to envisage the interests of their fellowmen as clearly as they do their own makes force an inevitable part of the process of social cohesion."[2] Here again is a dialectical tension which cannot be easily or safely resolved. If one is too politically realistic he will unduly stress the conflict in society.[3] On the other hand, if one tends too much to glorify social co-operation he will accept too many social injustices and will choose the subtler forms of coercion over the more overt types.[4] "An adequate political morality must do justice to the insights of both moralists and political realists. It will recognise that human society will probably never escape social conflict, even though it extends the areas of social co-operation."[5]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 258.

[2] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 6.

[3] Ibid., p. 231.

[4] Ibid., p. 233.

[5] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

Religious idealism and political realism cannot be brought into a close harmony with each other. The needs and hopes of the individual cannot be reconciled to the necessities of man in his inter-group relations. The early Niebuhr sees no way out of this dilemma but to concede the necessity of an ethical dualism:

> It would therefore seem better to accept a frank dualism in morals than to attempt a harmony between the two methods which threatens the effectiveness of both. Such a dualism would have two aspects. It would make a distinction between the moral judgments applied to the self and to others; and it would distinguish between what we expect of individuals and of groups.[1]

In the later Niebuhr this dichotomy became a dialectical relationship. How this happens we shall now see.

3. Perfect justice cannot be achieved in the social order.

Niebuhr's original attempt to separate the demands of love for the individual from the requirements of justice for society is finally rejected. He comes to see that agape is the ultimate ethical norm for both the individual and society. Love is the basic law of man's nature and the ultimate requirement for his social life is brotherhood and not simply justice.

> Translated into these terms the Christian conception of the relation of historical justice to the love of the Kingdom of God is a dialectical one. Love is both the fulfillment and negation of all achievements of justice in history. ...There are therefore obligations to realize justice in indeterminate degrees; but none of

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[1] Ibid., p. 271.

> the realizations can assure the serenity of perfect fulfilment. ...Higher realizations of historic justice would be possible if it were more fully understood that all such realizations contain contradictions of, as well as approximations to, the ideal of love.[1]

There seem to be no limits on how far society can go in approximating the ideal of perfect justice but men must never entertain the illusion that they have achieved it. The principle of equality points beyond itself to love as a demand and fulfilment above justice. "Equal justice is the approximation to brotherhood under the conditions of sin."[2]

Love is dialectically related to justice because justice always points to a wider and deeper fulfilment of itself in love. On the other hand, all justice is negated by love as the unattainable norm of man's ethical life. Love transcends, fulfils and contradicts justice. "Agape stands in contradiction to all structures, schemes and systems of justice, insofar as all historic schemes of justice embody sinful elements, because they contain implicit rationalizations of special interests."[3] The Christian stands under the judgment and mercy of love while the

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 255.

[2] Ibid., p. 264.

[3] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 220.

Marxist, who also sees the self-interest involved in rules of justice, ends up in a state of moral cynicism or utopianism.[1]

4. The Impossible possibility.

It is Niebuhr's realism in regard to the nature of history which underlies his ethical realism. This dialectical relationship of man as creature and creator is at the heart of his diagnosis. Man's creaturely finiteness imposes limitations on the possibilities of all his actions. But the fact that man does, in some sense, stand in freedom over history he participates creatively in the historic process. "There is therefore no pure ethical norm in history; nor any hope of history gradually purifying itself so that it will achieve this norm."[2] Any ethical norm which is to cover the full scope of man's possibilities both in history and his transcendence over history must give full recognition to both of these facts. The universal love demand of the gospel gives one a position from which the ends of a social ethic may be viewed as proximate.[3]

Both "liberal" Protestantism and Marxism have made the mistake of regarding the transcendent norm as a simple historical possibility.[4] Any human virtue which rejects a

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 262.

[2] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 84.

[3] Niebuhr, The Godly and the Ungodly, p. 118.

[4] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 90.

higher goodness than can be achieved in history will eventually "degenerate into a fanatic self-righteousness. The worship of humanity disintegrates into the worship of self."[1]

To recognize the legitimate claims of a norm which stands above history is not to imply in any sense that Niebuhr is in sympathy with retreats into other-worldliness. "The final victory over man's disorder is God's and not ours; but we do have responsibility for proximate victories."[2] We cannot reject this world nor can we claim some premature resolution of its ambiguities or claim any achievement of its full possibilities within history.

Niebuhr refers to several Biblical principles as giving expression to the transcendent norm which must guide all moral action: The Kingdom of God;[3] the agape of Christ and His Cross;[4] and God Himself.[5]

Protestantism has always put the concept of a "natural law" in a secondary position to those transcendent norms because it has entertained a much stronger awareness of the

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[1]Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 242.

[2]Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, p. 111.

[3]Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, p. 121.

[4]Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, pp. 85-90.

[5]Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 197.

uniqueness of each individual occasion and the frequent irrelevance of general principles.

> The will of God is the norm, the life of Christ is the revelation of that will, and the individual faces the awful responsibility of seeking to do God's will amidst all the complexities of human existence with no other authoritative norm but that ultimate one.[1]

It is, however, this concern for the ultimate norm which has also kept Protestantism from working toward the achievement of "relative standards" and "proximate goals" in the political sphere.[2] The methods Niebuhr would use in achieving proximate goals will be discussed in the following section on his political realism.

Niebuhr does consistently hold to a conviction from his earliest writing[3] to his latest. He reaffirms his contention that the Christian faith is more relevant to the individual than to society:

> ...the ultimate truths almost bound to be misused by collective man and his majesties. Only the individual has the self-transcendence to measure the distance between his finiteness and the ultimate source of meaning. And only the individual can know the impossible possibility of life transcending nature-history

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. I, p. 63.

[2] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

[3] Niebuhr, Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 124. and the entire thesis of Moral Man and Immoral Society.

> in some act of heroism and sacrifice which defies all rational calculations and points to an ultimate, if not eternal end.[1]

The law of love confronts man in history with an impossibility.[2] But the agape of the Cross not only affirms the impossibility of perfection in history but points to a fulfilment beyond history which is demonstrated by an act in history. This is the paradox of God's power over history being expressed in God's powerlessness in history. As Niebuhr puts it, "There is, in short, no moral solution for the moral problem of life."[3] We see the moral dilemma of man in the Cross but its resolution is in the religious dimension of grasping by faith the dialectical relationship of God and man; Eternity and history. How is man delivered from his historic fate?

> There can be emancipation only in the word of God which is spoken to man from beyond all human possibilities. This word must be heard in faith and repentance: in faith, because every effort to comprehend it completely reduces it to some human value; in repentance, because it convicts all life of the sin of pretending to be what it is not.[4]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, p. 138.

[2] Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 131.

[3] Niebuhr, The Godly and the Ungodly, p. 104.

[4] Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, pp. 223-224.

V. POLITICAL REALISM

If our thesis is correct, that Niebuhr's basic interest is in man in history, we can see how realistic is his diagnosis of man, sin, society and morality in the light of historical necessities. Perhaps the most vital and challenging insight of Niebuhr has been in the area of morality in man's collective life. Both the Bible and the Reformation confirm man's tendency to ignore the demands of the social structures by entertaining only the moral demands of personal perfection or identifying too easily the moral achievements of the individual with optimistic views of man's social progress. As we noted earlier, this was illustrated in Luther's indifference to politics and Calvin's pretentious domination of the political order. Niebuhr insists that the Bible represents these two approaches to government; and justice can only be done when they are held in balance. In the one, government is ordained of God and, in the other, government makes a false claim to virtue.[1] Because man's collective life is more impressive and imposing, its achievements are more likely to evoke idolatrous claims. The Bible understands this dialectical character of government as "at once the source of order and the root of injustice in a community."[2]

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[1] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 279.

[2] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 249.

Niebuhr is convinced that the New Testament, and Jesus in particular, is basically indifferent to the harsh realities of the political realm. Not because it had illusions about personal perfection as over against social imperfections, but rather the New Testament had an apocalyptic hope--God would triumph over the powers of history in His own good time. "Not until the hope of the second coming of the Saviour vanished and the church had grown from a politically irresponsible sect to a community embracing an empire did it come to terms with the political problem."[1]

The first real note of political realism was sounded in western culture by Augustine and his doctrine of the "two cities." From his perspective of the "City of God," he could realistically assess the activities of the "earthly city" in its struggles with self-interest and power. "This was a new note of realism, quite distinct from the bland analyses of political realities in all the empires of history, which had in fact the common characteristics of a religious source of authority and a moralistic estimate of the power realities."[2]

The two distortions which emerged from Augustine's realism were the pretentious claims of the papacy that the Church was in fact the city of God and the Thomistic dichotomy

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[1]Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 215.

[2]Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, p. 140.

of the natural and the supernatural orders of existence. Luther's particular misunderstanding was the idea of "two realms," based on the "two cities" of Augustine, in which one was for believers and the other for unbelievers.[1]

Niebuhr also espouses an ethical dualism. He makes a distinction between the moral judgments as applied to the self and others; and also between the morality of the individual and the group.[2] Niebuhr shares some of Luther's pessimism about the applicability of Christian love to the political realm but his realism goes beyond both Augustine and Luther when he says, "There is not enough imagination in any social group to render it amenable to the influence of pure love."[3] All social groups being what they are cannot be subjected to the demands of love.

There are still those who regard the "medieval synthesis" as the Golden Age to which we must return.

> If, however, our analysis be valid that the resentment caused by ecclesiastical universalism and expressed in varied forms was inevitable, then only nostalgia could prompt a return to this comparatively uncomplicated past. The historical evidence is that the day of the quasi-universal empire is over. The parochial and particular forces which must be managed are too vital and autonomous, and the overarching ideological framework is not sufficiently strong to furnish one of the forces of

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[1] Ibid., p. 143.

[2] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. 270-271.

[3] Ibid., p. 272.

> cohesion. ...We live in the world of autonomous nations which must achieve such precarious order and peace as is possible for them in our kind of world.[1]

The days of political and religious empires may be over but Niebuhr sees in Communism "a new and yet old, form of quasi-universalism--in the form of a secularized and utopian version of the Christian culture."[2] Its power is in the appeal of an ideological system which offers man the hope and possibility of unity in a world community. For Niebuhr that hope is an unrealistic utopia. An early and consistent view of Niebuhr's has been that "there never will be a community of mankind in the sense that there is a national community."[3] He cannot envisage any cohesive force or forces which will transcend ethnic, racial, language and religious parochialisms.

But we must return to a more careful analysis of Niebuhr's political realism. The initial impact of Niebuhr's thought was in his view of society as an inevitable area of social conflict and power struggles. The collective life of man is inescapably involved in the injustices which stem from the imbalances of power structures. The result is a competition of interests and any political realism which understands that fact will recognize the legitimate need

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[1] Niebuhr, Nations and Empires, pp. 144-145.

[2] Ibid., p. 145.

[3] Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 181.

of coercive forces to help mitigage the worst effects of social conflict.[1] Because the sensitive religious spirit is aware of the dangers inherent in the use of force to establish or maintain justice, it becomes politically irrelevant and irresponsible. "If that fear can be overcome religious ideals may yet achieve social and political significance."[2] It is this insight which served as the basis of Niebuhr's severe criticism of pacifism and most other forms of religious idealism.

The source of the conflict between ethics and politics is to be found in the twin focus of man's morality. He lives with a sensitive conscience about his inner life and also knows the demands of his social life.[3] A rationalistic utilitarianism stands somewhere between this personal religious morality and socially oriented political morality. It avoids the extremes of the other two:

> By placing a larger measure of moral approval upon egoistic impulses than does religious morality and by disapproving coercion, conflict and violence more unqualifiedly than politically oriented morality, it manages to resolve the conflict between them. But it is not as realistic as either. It easily assumes a premature identity between self-interest and social interest and establishes a spurious harmony between

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[1] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. i-xxii, pp. 1-20.

[2] Ibid., p. 81.

[3] Ibid., p. 257.

> egoism and altruism. ...Rationalism in morals therefore insists on less social restraint to be necessary than political realism demands.[1]

Niebuhr goes on to suggest the need for "a more radical political orientation" combined with "more conservative religious convictions."[2] Radicalism has two essential features. It involves a method of observation which penetrates through the moral pretensions of society and exposes the true nature of the power-relations which are at the heart of social organization. The second factor is that radicalism, as a kind of action, is prepared to work toward the achievement of a balance of power for the sake of justice. But radicalism is not without its dangers: "If the liberal spirit is beset by the sin of hypocrisy because it inclines to provide moral refinements for essentially immoral relations, the besetting sin of a consistent radicalism is cruelty, because it fails to appreciate the motives of honest sympathy and justice which manifest themselves in any society."[3]

Whether Niebuhr was ever "religiously conservative" may be open to doubt but his apparent approval of "political radicalism" was always tempered by what he knew to be its weaknesses. As a comparative statement, however, Niebuhr was prepared to be more radical than most of his Christian contemporaries.

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[1] Ibid., p. 261.

[2] Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, p. ix.

[3] Ibid., p. 251-252.

Governments are always in a state of tension between the amount of power used to maintain order and the restraint of that power to prevent tyranny. No governmental power will mean social anarchy and too much power will result in social injustices. Niebuhr is convinced that there is no fully satisfactory method of resolving this tension.[1] One contribution of the Christian faith ought to be "that political controversies are always conflicts between sinners and not between righteous men and sinners."[2] Such Christian realism will provide humility for those who are always tempted to resolve the tensions by making some self-righteous claim in either the abandonment or the use of power.

Further, we may note how Niebuhr eventually tempers his "radicalism" when he speaks of the two essential elements in all community life: "A central organizing principle and power" plus an "equilibrium of power."[3] What he comes to see is that community life requires an ideological standard which transcends a mere balance of power.

> It is obvious that the principle of government, or the organization of the whole realm of social vitalities, stands on a higher plane of moral sanction and social necessity than the principle of the balance of power. The latter without the former degenerates into anarchy.[4]

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[1] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 27.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

[3] Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, Vol. II, p. 267.

[4] Ibid., p. 276.

The common error of the Christian is to substitute the Kingdom of God for the relative schemes of justice required in man's social life. Politics must realistically appraise historical possibilities and should not be deterred from doing so by religious idealism.[1] It must cultivate the "instinct for the possible, only a little advanced beyond the actual, instead of the utopian and ideal which hovers so precariously between the possible and the impossible."[2]

Men must, in the political order, work for the possible in terms of "proximate" goals.[3] "The relativity of all moral ideals cannot absolve us from the necessity and duty of choosing between relative values."[4] Nowhere is this more true than in politics. As Niebuhr put it very strongly, let those who are unwilling or unprepared to wrestle with the ambiguities of history "retire to the monastery."[5] Every society must devise "working principles of justice, as criteria for its positive law and system of restraints."[6] But a political principle is more difficult than a purely

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[1]Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 25.

[2]Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, p.69.

[3]Ibid., p. 111.

[4]Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 131.

[5]Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 174.

[6]Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1945), p. 53.

moral one. In terms of personal morality, one tries to deny or to overcome self-interest. On the other hand, a political morality must "deflect, beguile, harness and use self-interest for the sake of a tolerable harmony of the whole."[1] In other words, political principles cannot ignore the ambiguities and relativities of history while religious principles can and often do.

Some of the more profound political principles are embedded in a religious interpretation of existence but, no matter how lofty they are, "every historical statement of them is subject to amendment."[2] Moral and political principles are subject to constant re-examination because human vitalities have no neatly definable limits. Man's life in society is too indeterminate to have it strictly defined in theories of "natural law." The attempt to identify the "laws of nature" with "human nature" is misleading and ultimately fruitless.[3]

Here is one of the few places where Niebuhr makes room for a legitimate use of reason. It will not only help us in the formation of the "working principles" but it will also help us to determine how and when they can be applied. Reason can be useful in "checking impulse"[4] and in our capacity to

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[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] Ibid., p. 53.

[3] Ibid., p. 57.

[4] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 40.

analyze a social situation;[1] formulate the working principles and then determine the merits of their application.

> There are in short fewer specific principles of justice with 'eternal' validity than is assumed in almost all theories of natural law.
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> Rules of justice do not follow in a "necessary manner" from some basic proposition of justice. They are the fruit of a rational survey of the whole field of human interests, of the structure of human life and the casual sequences in human relations. ...Reason itself is not the source of law, since it is not possible to prove the self's obligation to the neighbour by any rational analysis which does not assume the proposition it intends to prove. Yet reason works helpfully to define the obligation of love in the complexities of various types of human relations.[2]

A major contribution of the Christian faith will be its demand that all systems and principles of justice be subjected to the law of love. This will provide society with a needed flexibility (as over against rigid rules or principles); a challenging norm; and a sense of humility in coping with the complexities of human relations. "We need a pragmatic attitude towards every institution of property and of government, recognizing that none of them are as sacrosanct as some supposedly Christian or secular system of law has made them, that all of them are subject to corruption and that their abolition is also subject to corruption."[3] The fact that the

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 219.

[3] Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, p. 106.

virtue and corruption of all political realities stand under the judgment of love delivers Niebuhr from his own earlier approval of an ethical dualism.

The Niebuhr of Moral Man and Immoral Society laid great stress upon the nature of power and inevitable conflict which society in its quest for justice could never escape. Morally good ends, in some cases, could only be achieved through coercion and conflict.[1] At that time he thought political power was responsible but economic power was irresponsible. Under the circumstances economic power dominated political power and to Niebuhr this meant that democracy had not solved the social problem of power and justice.[2] Power which could not be made socially responsible should be destroyed--"the power which resides in economic ownership for instance."[3] Forces of moral self-restraint would have to be used on those powers which could never be subjected to social control.

The severity of Niebuhr's political radicalism is somewhat tempered as he stresses the necessity of democracy and partially rejects his earlier emphasis on the use of coercive methods to resolve social conflicts. "Democracy is a perennial necessity because justice will always require that the power of government be checked as democracy checks it; and because

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[1] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. xx.

[2] Ibid., p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p. 20.

peace requires that social conflict be arbitrated by the non-violent technique of the democratic process."[1]

This profound relationship of the democratic process to justice was pungently stated in one of Niebuhr's most memorable insights: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."[2] Because a free society does assume that men can achieve some measure of justice it must always guard against an excessive optimism which will eventuate in political chaos. On the other hand, if there is too much pessimism about the prospects of approximating justice there will be a tendency for society to adopt tyrannical methods of coercing its conflicting interests into a state of harmony.[3] Only a thoroughgoing Christian realism in its view of man and society can provide a sound philosophical or religious basis for democracy. It is not pessimistic or cynical about man's sin nor is it unduly optimistic or idealistic about man's virtue.[4] Niebuhr is convinced that the modern distortion of democracy is not that it is cynical but that it is sentimental. Because of its superficial view of human nature it entertains too many easy solutions for

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[1] Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics, p. 85.

[2] Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. vi.

[3] Ibid., p. v.

[4] Ibid., p. vii.

man's social problems. The political order, as well as Christianity, must come to appreciate the Biblical insight that all human striving is subject to the corruption of self-interest.[1]

Niebuhr has no illusions about democracy solving the problems of man's social life. A democracy which recognizes their insoluble character will at least come closer to the creation of a political climate in which men, who is both finite and spiritually transcendent, can more fully express his possibilities. "For democracy is a method of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems."[2] Only in a democratic society can freedom and order be kept in their proper balance. Niebuhr's political realism is seen in his insistence that freedom and order must be held in a dialectical state of tension. The difficulty facing democracy is that it is always on the very edge of extinction. Its virtue is that it most adequately reflects the freedom and dynamic tensions which are inherent in human nature.

> Ideally, democracy is a permanently valid form of social and political organization which does justice to two dimensions of human existence: to man's spiritual stature and his social character, to the uniqueness and variety of individual life and to the common necessities of all men. ...Democracy can therefore not be equated with freedom.

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[1] Ibid., p. 15-19.

[2] Ibid., p. 83.

> An ideal democratic order seeks unity within the conditions of freedom; and maintains freedom within the framework of order.[1]

The big issue confronting political power is the extent to which it shall regulate or control economic power. Niebuhr thinks there is no "ideal" solution to this problem. In the early period of Niebuhr's writing he was impressed with the irresponsibility of economic power and was inclined to agree with the Marxist diagnosis of its priority and its intransigence. Twenty-five years later Niebuhr sees a partial solution to the problem in the equalization of political and economic power. The early Niebuhr thought the solution would come with more social control over economic power.[2] He always questioned whether the Communists could destroy economic power without creating a strong center of political power.[3] The unrealistic nature of Marxism is the illusion of proletariat virtue in the use of political power and the completely utopian idea that the need for governmental power would be finally erradicated. Niebuhr finally concedes a development of factors which moderate his own reactions to economic power and disprove the Marxist's diagnosis of economic realities. "Thus the development of the trade unions and growth of the welfare state have negated the historical 'logic'

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[1] Ibid., p. 10.

[2] Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 27.

[3] Ibid., p. 192.

which, according to Marxists made a climate of injustice and revolution inevitable in a technical civilization."[1] Democracy will express political realism precisely to the degree that it can prevent self-interest from damaging the needs of the whole community.[2]

The epitome of realism in the political realm is the recognition of the moral ambiguity of those structures in which political and economic power are embodied: government hierarchies of authority and property. These forces confront men with problems which can never be completely solved within history. To understand this is to know how the "Kingdom of God is relevant to every historic situation but can never be realized in history."[3]

Let us summarize the salient points in Niebuhr's political realism and its relationship to a realistic Christian faith:

(1) Society is largely composed of conflicting power structures.

(2) The political problem is to achieve justice through a balance of power.

(3) If excessive power can only be managed by methods then Christians must not let their idealism prevent

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[1] Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 215.

[2] Ibid., p. 214.

[3] Ibid., p. 215.

them from using them. Goodness without power is impossible and power without goodness is unbearable.

(4) Man's collective ego as expressed in political life and achievements is most prone to idolatry. National loyalties tend to be excessively self-righteous.

(5) Political "radicalism" will not only observe the true nature of social conflict but will, if need be, participate in it. A truly Christian radicalism will avoid unnecessary cruelty.

(6) Men must devise "working principles" to give guidance in the quest for those relative values which can only be achieved in history with all its ambiguities and limitless possibilities. The principles must relate to actual possibilities and not to idealistic impossibilities.

(7) Unlike "natural law" theories, these principles must always be subject to further scrutiny and amendment to meet ever changing conditions.

(8) A political ethic will thus include prudent and pragmatic methods for determining the extent to which justice has been or needs to be done.

(9) All political activity stands under the judgment of Christian love. As in all human activity, sin is inescapable. Under the perfect norm of love all political objectives become proximate goals.

(10) Christian realism can maintain a balance between optimism and pessimism in the evaluation of political realities

because it truly understands the persistence and possibilities of both man's sin and his virtue.

(11) Democracy is the only satisfactory political order for the following reasons:

(a) It provides for the peace of society through the arbitration of conflicting interests.
(b) It is essential to justice because only the democratic process can adequately check the power of government and insure justice through a balance of power.
(c) Only the democratic process makes adequate allowance for man's freedom. It tolerates the necessary tension between man's need for freedom and the necessity of order.
(d) As a political approach to peace, justice, power, order, and freedom, democracy can, if it is realistic enough, acknowledge the dialectical and dynamic character of these insoluble problems--especially the extent to which political power should regulate economic power.

(12) Christian realism with its doctrine of man, history and sin can save the democratic process from seeking premature and absolute solutions to historical problems which can only have proximate solutions or no solutions at all. Democracy plus Christian realism can be saved from sentimental utopianism.

(13) Christian realism will make society aware of the inevitable corruption not only of its actions but also its moral ideals through self-interest. Democracy needs the kind of humility which Christian realism can provide.

(14) A genuine universal community of mankind is practically impossible because national ties are too intimate and strong. There is no cohesive power strong enough to

transcend these ethnic ties. "Mankind must go through a period in which corrupt forms of universalism must be defeated."[1]

(15) The medieval synthesis of church over society is neither possible nor desirable.

(16) Christian realism must avoid the pessimism of a Luther over the political order and equally reject the confidence of a Calvin.

(17) New Testament religion confirms the impossibility of solving political problems completely and absolutely within history. Christian realism points to a transcendent fulfillment without destroying the necessity of moral effort in achieving "proximate victories."

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[1]Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. 109.

VI. CHRISTIAN ACTION

As the "Christendom" group came into being on the British side of the Atlantic there came into being on the American side an organization known as the "Fellowship of Socialist Christians." Founded in 1930 by a small group of men, including John Bennett and Reinhold Niebuhr, it carried this name until 1947 when it became the "Frontier Fellowship." By 1951 it was incorporated into a larger organization known as "Christian Action."

From the very beginning, Reinhold Niebuhr was the master mind and the dominant voice in the movement. In 1935 he edited a quarterly journal known as Radical Religion. In 1941 Niebuhr, along with John Bennett, became an editor of a fortnightly publication known as Christianity and Crisis.

In addition to their publications, "other activities of the Fellowship included the support, for several years during the 1930's, of the Delta Cooperative Farm in Hillhouse, Mississippi, support for a lay German Theological Institute at Bad Boll during the years after World War II, and more recently, support of the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York City. Individual members have been active and often prominent in causes ranging from Americans for Democratic Action, to the World Council of Churches."[1]

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[1] Christian Faith and Social Action, Ed. by John A. Hutchison, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 5.

Union Theological Seminary served as the outlet for Niebuhr's academic interests. The Frontier Fellowship was the major instrument through which he could exert his influence in the direction of Christian Action at the practical level. In addition, one has only to take a superficial look at the bibliography of Niebuhr's writings to see the nature and extent of his influence in a wide variety of publications.[1] Our present purpose is to illustrate from his periodical writing the character of Niebuhr's position on several sound issues.

A. German-Americanism

As early as World War I Niebuhr severely criticized German-Americans for their failure to participate in the social development of America.[2] The attack was levelled at a segment of American society from which Niebuhr himself had emerged.

Because German-Americans were largely engaged in agricultural pursuits, they tended to ignore the social issues which centered around industry and commercial life. Niebuhr says the Irish-American and the Jews were far more potent factors in our political and economic life. In their effort to maintain some semblance of national identity the

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, His Religious, Social and Political Thought, Edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, (New York: Macmillan, 1961) Kegley and Bretall, pp. 455-478.

[2] The Failure of German Americanism, Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 118, 1916 (July, pp. 15-18).

German-Americans withdrew into a shell of religious isolation. They further alienated themselves from the prevailing moral climate in their opposition to all temperance reforms.

B. Prohibition

This last criticism is interesting to notice in the light of Niebuhr's own opposition to prohibition. In the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, January 16, 1919, the U. S. A. adopted and tried to enforce prohibition until the ratification of the Twenty First Amendment, December 5, 1933, when the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed.

Niebuhr did not make himself a very popular figure in certain religious quarters by his opposition to prohibition. He objected on several grounds. In the first place, we may persuade a moderate drinker to abandon his pleasure for the sake of those who are weak, "but that kind of conduct represents an ethical maximum, and law can deal effectively only with ethical minimums."[1] He went on to suggest that "Puritan Christianity" could not and had no right to impose its morality on the entire social order. Religious motives are weakened when men seek to maintain them by political force.

Niebuhr further interpreted the desire for law enforcement on the part of the "official church" as "partly a

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Protestantism and Prohibition," The New Republic, (Oct. 24, 1928, Vol. 56), p. 266.

compensation for the moral defeat of the church's leadership within its own membership."[1]

The disturbing depth of Niebuhr's challenge can be seen when he points out that "Puritan Christianity is the moral sublimation of the virtues and prejudices of the middle classes. ...It arises out of the genteel poverty or modest economic circumstance of the traditional middle classes in which men are not tempted to the kind of indulgence of physical appetites which poor men covet and rich men enjoy."[2] Middle class puritanical morality was rooted in economics. It was justified and preserved by religious sanctions. But Protestantism is soon involved in a dilemma because one set of puritan values is working against another: "The virtues of thrift and industry which Puritanism has sanctified in a special way have led to a prosperity which tends to undermine the virtues of temperance."[3]

C. Imperialism

Niebuhr suggested that some nations were prosperous because they had been imperialistic but America was imperialistic precisely because it was prosperous.[4] Some nations go

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[1] Ibid., p. 267.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Awkward Imperialists," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 145, (May 1930) p. 670.

out in search of raw material for their industry while the U. S. A. goes out in search of markets for its surplus production. The U. S. A. was not seeking territorial expansion but simply sought a favorable political climate in which economic liberties could be taken and markets expanded.

There were two profound insights in Niebuhr's understanding of America's role in world affairs. Whether they were aware of it or not, Americans were extending their power over others and they failed to understand that men hate those who hold power over them: "Hatred is compounded of envy and fear, and power breeds both."[1]

The second insight was Niebuhr's appreciation of why men fear power. "The fear is justified because powerful individuals and nations, even when they make benevolent pretensions, are not as generous as their pretensions or even as their intentions."[2] Power inevitably breeds both hatred and self-righteousness and those who wield it are seldom conscious of its effects.

D. Pacifism

Niebuhr had ambivalent feelings about pacifism. He recognized that men are taught to trust each other and do so because they know mistrust would undermine the social

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[1] Ibid., p. 671.

[2] Ibid.

order. On the other hand, if he carries his trust too far he "may invite aggression and tempt his fellows to dishonesty."[1]

Many Americans in their support of world peace and disarmament simply did not understand certain harsh economic realities. Niebuhr accuses them of entertaining a "naive" faith because they want Americans to trust the rest of the world and believe the world will trust America in return. "They do not realize that a nation cannot afford to trust anyone if it is not willing to go the length of sharing its advantages."[2] Love must not only be trusting but also sacrificial. Trust that does not share its privileges will not be either "creative or redemptive."

In the light of what was happening in Germany at the time, Niebuhr's insight was painfully true and prophetically accurate: "A strong and privileged nation, strong enough to be emancipated from the fear of any immediate attack, and privileged enough to need nothing which the force of arms might be able to secure, may indulge the peace ideal for the moment. But ultimately both its strength and its privilege will incite enmity and aggression."[3] And that it did!

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Critique of Pacifism," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 139 (May, 1927), p. 637.

[2] Ibid., p. 640.

[3] Ibid., p. 641.

Niebuhr also knew the pacifist position rested on a false premise. Material advantages cannot be guaranteed simply by the possession of the right kind of spiritual attitudes. Pacifists should have no illusions about the fact that armies are needed to preserve higher standards of living than the rest of the world enjoys.[1]

From 1932 to 1933, Niebuhr was the chairman of the American section of the "Fellowship of Reconciliation" and by 1934 he wrote an article on "Why I Leave the F.O.R."[2]

He is critical of the F.O.R. because it tried to maintain a position of neutrality by avoiding any identification with either the underprivileged or the privileged class. Niebuhr insists that it is "practically impossible to be completely neutral in a social struggle and that the effort at neutrality is morally more dangerous in a class conflict than in an international war because it works to the advantage of intrenched interests against advancing forces."[3]

Some members of the F.O.R. tried to identify themselves with the just aims of the workers but they wanted to do so without the use of any form of coercion. This, for Niebuhr, was an intolerable position. For him it was a typical example of the "failure of liberal Protestantism to recognize

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why I Leave the F.O.R.," Christian Century, Vol. 51 (January 3, 1934).

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

the coercive character of political and economic life."[1] It was an obvious fact for Niebuhr that we all live in a social order which maintains its cohesion partially by the use of various forms of coercion.

He went on to suggest that he was a pacifist only in the sense that he would refuse to participate in an international armed conflict:

> Perhaps it would clear the issue if we admitted that we were not pacifists at all. We probably all recognize the terrible possibilities of violence. We regard an international armed conflict as so suicidal that we are certain that we will not participate in it.[2]

He goes on to point out that as a Marxist he accepts the inevitability of conflict in social change. "As a Marxian and as a Christian it reveals to me the futility of finding a moral absolute in the relativities of politics."[3] It is the modern liberal illusion of Christianity which believes "that the law of love could be made an absolute of conduct in social morality and politics."[4] As a Marxian, Niebuhr will try to direct the conflict toward the achievement of economic justice. As a Christian, he will forgive and not hate. "Non-hatred is a much more important

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 18.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 19.

sign and symbol of Christian faith than non-violence."[1] Social conflict is inevitable and only Christian realism can restrain its inclination toward bitterness and hatred.

E. Social Controls

The economic climate of the 1930's in Europe and America was a source of discouragement for Niebuhr. He was convinced socialism was "inevitable in Europe either through catastrophe or by gradual change."[2]

The pioneering spirit of individualism and optimism which pervade American life decidedly restrict the possibilities of extending political or social control over economic forces. The hope, as Niebuhr sees it, of bringing America's industrial society under social control is further diminished by "the thinness of our cultural traditions and the lack of self-assurance of our dominant groups."[3]

He questioned whether, as in the case of England, the national community could socialize "finance and industry without meeting the resistance of a facist venture from those whose power is being destroyed."[4]

Niebuhr is critical of Christians who entertain the illusion that big business will voluntarily abandon policies

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Catastrophe or Social Control," Harpers, Vol. 165 (June, 1932), p. 114.

[3] Ibid., p. 117.

[4] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

which "are bound to lead to disaster." The economic power groups are not intelligent enough to alter their ways and the laborers are not intelligent enough to provide the needed pressure. "It will be practically impossible to secure social change in America without the use of very considerable violence."[1]

Niebuhr was genuinely pessimistic about America's future and it led him into a prediction which history proved to be false: "It is not at all out of the realm of probabilities that the middle-class paradise which we built on this continent, and which reached its zenith no later than 1929, will be in decay before the half-century mark is rounded."[2]

Not only did Niebuhr's extensive writing revolutionize American Protestantism in regard to social ethics, but his voice was also heard in many secular quarters of industry and government. It was his candid realism and profound analysis of the issues involved which compelled men to listen when he spoke. Niebuhr wrote on a vast range of subjects and we have only taken a sampling--enough to see how his dialectical method pervades all his works.

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[1] Ibid., p. 118.

[2] Ibid.

EPILOGUE

1. William Temple

Some men are easily categorized into various schools of thought. With others it is far more difficult. In regard to William Temple it is practically impossible. Some would call him a socialist. He was not a socialist in the usual secular sense. He was undoubtedly a Christian but certainly in his own unique way. Temple seriously endeavored to christianize the socialists and socialize the Christians.

The personal pilgrimage of Temple may serve as a clue to his method of handling ethical issues. His early adult life was devoted largely to the problem of constructive theology. This he did within the framework of his own Anglican tradition and classical training. He does not reflect or react to the continental theology of his contemporaries. He tries to construct a theological system which will stand on its own merit.

In Temple there is no conflict between revelation and reason. God acts or reveals and man thinks or responds. If man will think accurately (for Temple it was largely a process of deductive logic), his conclusions will not be

incompatible with the claims of an authentic religious revelation.

An insight into Temple's method can be seen in the chronological development of his own thought. (1) First was the formation of a constructive theology. (2) This theological position served as a basis for the formulation of "guiding principles." (3) And finally, Temple was concerned with the relevance and application of his principles to the everyday problems of man's ethical behavior.

A. Temple was a realist in his understanding of the need for flexibility in adherence to principles. Life was too complex and unpredictable for anyone to conceive of principles that would always fit the facts. Even at those points where the principles did not seem to apply, Temple had a higher principle: a man was always under obligation to so act as to achieve the highest possible good in any situation. What one understood as the highest possible good might be known through rational understanding of the circumstances or through faith in the Christian revelation. Temple was a realist in recognizing the relative nature of particular ethical judgments. There is no universal obligation attached to specific judgments of conscience but man is universally and absolutely under obligation to will whatever is right on any particular occasion. There is the universal demand to be conscientious.[1] What we do is

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[1] Nature, Man and God, p. 405.

relative, but the obligation to do it is absolute. Our obligation to be obliged is unqualified and unrestricted.

As we have already noted, Temple was aware of this necessity for relativity in the realm of politics and economics. Even killing in warfare was justified under certain circumstances. But for Temple the church could not tolerate re-marriage after a separation due to any other case than adultery. Even here he insists that Christ did not legislate on the matter but Christ did lay down "the one true principle."[1] This is an apparently Anglican blind spot in Temple's realism.

B. Temple was a realist in his acknowledgment of the presence and persistence of sin. For Temple the source of sin was fundamentally psychological and not historical. Sinfulness was rooted in man's perverted self-consciousness or self-assertion against God. Temple astutely recognized that self-hood, or being a self, was the basis both of our spiritual good and spiritual evil. The place of sin is also the place where all moral improvement lies. Sin is rooted in our spiritual life and that is why Temple thought we could never cure it.[2]

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[1]William Temple, Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927), p. 116.

[2]William Temple, Centrality of Christ, (New York: Morehouse-Gorham, 1936), p. 19.

In contrast to Demant, Temple never interprets the "Fall" as a kind of historical fall of man from some original state of purity or innocence. Temple was convinced that man was never free from his self-centeredness.

C. Temple was a realist in his rejection of the "moralistic" (or personalistic) view of sin and man's deliverance from it. The individual might be morally good on some rare occasions but he could not escape involvement in society and its sinful structures. Christianity was never simply concerned about religion as a private or personal affair. Temple knew that society itself had to be altered. His emphasis on man as a socially created creature gave him a sense of realism in regard to the need for social reconstruction. Sin is social and so is salvation.

D. Temple was a realist in his insistence that the Kingdom of God belonged in history. As we have already seen, Temple rejected both extremes: that of the utopian who idealized the Kingdom of God out of any historic possibilities and the pessimist whose concept of man made hopeless any possibility of the Kingdom coming. History is extremely important. Progress is possible but not inevitable. The Kingdom of God is a perfected social order toward which men strive.

E. Temple was a realist in his understanding of the relationship of love to justice. Christians have always understood love as the supreme commandment but they have always had difficulty in applying love to social relations.

It was usually personal sentimentalism without any relevance to the problem of resolving conflicts between groups. Temple was acutely aware of social problems where justice was required and, without much basis in the teaching of Jesus or the New Testament, he made love relevant by insisting that justice was the primary form of love in social organization.

F. Temple was a realist in his involvement in the actual affairs of secular society. Social ethics was never purely a theoretical matter with him. He was a realist in his attempt to square his theories with the world as it actually was. He was personally involved in labor and management disputes; in the problems Christians faced during the war; in a defense of Democracy; in the ethics of penal action and punishment; in the Nazi massacre of the Jews; in issues facing education; and the relations of church and state.

No single man in British life during the first half of the Twentieth Century gave so much in theory or practice toward the solution of social problems facing the Christian Church. Perhaps we can generalize enough to say that Templeb great contribution was in the formation of an ethical system based on "guiding principles." His great concern was with pre-ethical theology and the principles which could be deduced therefrom.

2. V. A. Demant and M. B. Reckitt

Both Demant and Reckitt represented a school of thought based on "natural law." During the period between the two world wars their influence in England was widely felt. They were practically unknown figures in American Protestantism.

By the time of the Malvern Conference in 1941 it was apparent that the "Christendom" group had reached the summit of its influence. It was obviously William Temple who gave them this opportunity and, as Reckitt said, if Temple had lived their cause might also have survived. It may be significant to note that Temple never mentioned the concept of "natural law" in his Gifford Lectures on Nature, Man and God. Because of his untimely death, it is not easy to determine just how much Temple was coming around to their point of view.

A. There is a realism in Demant and Reckitt expressed in their concern for a true diagnosis and understanding of things as they really are. With Reckitt the inclination was to base this understanding in a "Christian sociology." For Demant it is rooted in theology. Both Reckitt and Demant are inclined to use "sociology" in a different way than the social scientist uses it. The secular sociologist is engaged in an empirical investigation of society in order to observe what is actually occurring. Reckitt and Demant are enunciating a Christian social philosophy. As with Temple, their method is theoretical-deductive, going from the general to the particular, rather than empirical-inductive, going from the particular observations to the general conclusions. Both insist on an

understanding of man as he really is and any view of man which ignores his spiritual dimensions is not dealing with the whole man. Both also invite a realistic appraisal of society, but they are inclined to make claims for their Christian social philosophy as being a Christian sociology.

B. Demant and Reckitt are realists in maintaining that religion and politics must be held together in a state of tension. Especially in Demant one senses a desire to make the secular order of politics somewhat independent of the spiritual order. Means and ends may not be as neatly divided as Demant implies but his recognition of various spheres of activity as having their own special conditions and categories is an apparently valid insight. Religion represents absolute ideals and politics embodies relative possibilities. A Christian is caught in the inevitable tension. Their acknowledgment of the fact that politics is conditioned by the determinisms of nature and history is a mark of realism.

C. There is realism in their acceptance of compromise in politics. A Christian is not expected to hold uncompromisingly to a principle in complete disregard of the facts or the possibilities in any given situation. If the wrong choice is made then the Christian can be forgiven. If the right choice is made it is still not perfect and the church must go on declaring its higher objectives.

D. There is political realism in their understanding of the need for a balance of power within and between social

structures. No society can be healthy which does not recognize that all human activity is tainted with egoism. This quest for power must be held in check by another power to prevent mutual destruction.

E. Sin is realistically accepted as an inevitable part of human nature. Demant and Reckitt believe in "original sin." No person can escape this defect in human nature. Sin is a permanent and universal aspect of human existence. This fact diminishes any possibility of utopia in society or personal perfection in the individual. If society is ever perfected it will not be through human effort but by an act of God.

F. The concept of a "Christendom" implies that religion has a realistic concern for society. Demant was more inclined to resort to the medieval arrangement of church over culture. Reckitt is more realistic in his concern for ways in which the church can invade culture but not dominate it. Reckitt does, however, insist that we must go back to the end of the middle ages to inquire about the nature of the church and society. Both Demant and Reckitt were committed to the recovery and reconstruction of a Christian civilization.

G. Demant is more inclined to believe in the possibility of formulating and strictly adhering to principles. When they are interpreted within the framework of "natural law" they take on an unyielding rigidity and inflexibility. Reckitt, on the other hand, believes that Jesus did not

reveal principles but rather revealed the nature of God. At this point, Reckitt is more like Temple in his readiness to live by faith.

H. Dewant and Reckitt are realists in challenging the church to engage in a profound diagnosis of social ills. Both seek to direct the thought and energy of Christians toward the world. The church may have to clarify her own theology but the final thrust must go beyond herself to the world where men live from day to day. They call for a dialogue between the church and the world.

3. Henry Nelson Wieman

Wieman represents a deviation from traditional patterns of theological thought. In some ways the background and extend of his influence has been peculiarly American. He reflects a sympathy with the most dominant force of this century--science. Of all the men in this study, Wieman is profoundly concerned with the problem of epistemology. He is convinced that the scientific method is not one way in which we know the truth about some limited segment of reality but the means by which we know anything to be true.

Because of his commitment to the empirical method, Wieman tends to avoid traditional theology and its final dependence on revelation. He asks a question which none of our other men either ask or try to answer. How do we distinguish between a true or a false revelation? To be sure, Temple would concede that there is no conflict between revelation and reason but he does not show us how reason can

be used as a means of confirming or rejecting a revelation. Temple makes room for intuition but does not tell us how we can determine a good from a bad intuition. Demant, Reckitt and Niebuhr also resort finally to revelation but do not articulate a method for checking its validity.

Wieman frequently refers to those conditions which must be met in order for the creative event to occur. Perhaps Demant in his "natural law" is referring to the same thing. Wieman, however, does not believe in any set of pre-determined principles which can be imposed upon reality. Demant would say that his natural law is a description of reality and not something alien to it. In a private conversation with Demant, I asked him what changes, if any, he would make if he had it to do all over again. His reply was, "I would be more empirical." Wieman and Demant might have some agreement in their method but there would be a divergence over Wieman's "naturalism."

Wieman is an ethical realist for some of the following reasons:

A. For Wieman morality grows out of a realistic encounter with the world as it actually is. Adherence to moral principles to the exclusion of the actual world is called "moralism." Actual reality should command our first consideration and not ideals. Increase or growth in value must be related to actual existence. It can never be a wishful fancy or a purely sentimental ideal.

B. Wieman insists that God must be a part of known

reality. If God is beyond reality (supernatural), then He tends to become a human utility. We "use" Him to explain something or to comfort us. According to Wieman, if God is beyond knowledge then He is irrelevant to man. "To speak of what is not accessible to human life in any way is to speak nonsense."[1] Wieman asserts that God is found and known in actual events.

C. Evil is real and man is never free from sin. Wieman is critical of some theologians who are inclined to minimize the reality of evil by suggesting that God will and can, when He chooses, overcome evil. Wieman holds that wherever anything is good there is the possibility of evil. If God could triumph over evil in some final sense now then He is not really good or our involvement in evil is not a genuine struggle and God is playing a game with us. As long as we have anything like man and history we will have sin and evil.

D. Wieman takes history seriously. There is the possibility of some progress but man is only ushered into a new situation where further good and evil are possible. There is nothing inevitable about progress.

E. The Kingdom of God is for this world. Wieman says that personality is not the highest value for Jesus. He held the Kingdom of God, a society of people in creative relationship to each other, as of supreme value. The

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[1] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 299.

Kingdom can never fully come under historical conditions as we know them. Wieman also insists that no one knows the final outcome of history.

F. Social reconstruction is an essential part of Christian responsibility but the church must not go beyond the special area of its competence. According to Wieman, Christians must cooperate with politicians, economists and social scientists in achieving social change. There is no purely religious solution to social problems. Religionists may have something to say about all areas of life but they do not have everything to say which can be said in any one area.

G. Wieman acknowledges the presence of power structures in society. He realistically insists that power is always dangerous no matter who wields it. He holds no illusions that power is any less menacing in the hands of any individual or group. There can be no social peace until there is a judicious control of power.

H. There is a distinction to be made between love and justice. Love concerns the intimate and more personal relationships. Justice must deal with the more general needs of man. Love may deal with a particular situation in its own special way. Justice must be brought to bear on relationships where the decision has more far reaching consequences.

4. Reinhold Niebuhr

The most voluminous and vigorous voice in American Protestantism during the first half of the Twentieth Century was Reinhold Niebuhr. In his concern for the social order he stood in the "social gospel" tradition. No one, however, penetrated more deeply in their criticism of the illusions and sentimentalities of the social gospel than did Reinhold Niebuhr. Like the other men in this study, Niebuhr was in a state of reaction to some of the worst elements in the "liberal" movement.

The point of our thesis has been to show how, in spite of differences in theological perspective, these five men reflect a position best described as "ethical realism." Temple was obviously the least critical of his predecessors and contemporaries and Niebuhr was indubitably the most outspoken in his criticism.

Let us now briefly reiterate those reactions which make Niebuhr an ethical realist:

A. History is always involved in a state of dialectical tension between the temporal and the eternal. Any attempt to resolve the tension with too much emphasis on the eternal leads to other-worldliness and in some cases, utopianism. Too much stress on the temporal will lead to various forms of idolatry and ultimately to despair.

B. The Kingdom of God must come in history but when it does that will be the end of history. The Kingdom of God represents a state of perfection which transcends history and

when it comes it will mean the end of those tensions which characterize history as we now know it. The Kingdom of God is relevant to history but can never be fully embodied in history.

C. Progress is an illusion because each successive stage of human development only enhances the possibility of man's involvement in new forms of evil. Social change does not necessarily alter human nature.

D. Sin is inevitable. Man's inability to accept his finitude invariably leads him into pride. This inescapable concern with the self is the corrupting factor in all human behavior.

E. Men cannot apply their personal ideals to the problems of their collective behavior. Individual ethical norms cannot be applied to social relations. Inter-group relations demand justice while personal relations call for love. Justice is prompted by reason while love is motivated by concern.

F. History is fundamentally a power struggle. Various forms of economic and political power are the main contenders in the quest for power in the social order. Niebuhr's realistic criticism of the Marxists is that they believe a particular economic class when given political power will eventually give it up. Niebuhr insists that no power in the course of human history has ever voluntarily divested itself of its power. Power is dethroned only in a confrontation with another power structure.

Niebuhr is equally critical of Christians who believe that centers of power can be transformed by loving persuasion.

Justice can prevail in the social order only when there is a balance of power.

G. Justice must stand under the judgment of love. The law of love is normative for the Christian but it is beyond historic fulfilment. Both the "liberals" and the Marxists have thought of their norms as simple historical possibilities. All systems and principles of justice when subjected to the law of love will be flexible enough to meet the uniqueness of each historic occasion. Niebuhr rejects "natural law" because it too rigidly adheres to systems and principles rather than to the actualities of history.

H. Because no pure ethical norm is realizable in history, man is responsible for the achievement of "proximate victories." Social issues must be pragmatically considered in the light of the circumstances. Politics must deal with historical possibilities. Niebuhr agrees with Temple that politicians must realistically acknowledge the persistence of self-interest.

I. Both Jesus and the New Testament are irrelevant to the harsh realities of the political order because of an "apocalyptic hope." God was about to act. The end of the age was at hand and under those circumstances the early church was politically irresponsible.

In living by the law of love, Jesus was not so much irrelevant but rather demonstrating the transcendence of love as an ultimate ethical norm.

5. Critical Comparisons

Each of the five men in this study has made a significant contribution to the formation of a perspective in Christian ethics we have called "ethical realism." They have acknowledged and affirmed the emphasis of the "social gospel" on the social character of the Christian faith. The shift in emphasis has been at the point of depth in the diagnosis of social evils and a truer recognition of the conditions required for social change. It is a matter of honestly facing facts as they really are rather than entertaining unfounded hopes or optimistic illusions about man and his social structures. But even Reinhold Niebuhr, the most realistic of all the realists, exposes a strain of idealism when he says, "But our traffic with devils may lead to corruption and the day may come when we will be grateful for those who try to restrain all demons rather than choose between them."[1]

Let us summarize the most obvious and characteristic feature in the ethical thought of these realists:

Temple -- Guiding Principles.
Demant and Reckitt -- Natural Law.
Wieman -- Empiricism.
Niebuhr -- Dialecticism.

Temple in his attempt to formulate "guiding principles" is inclined to assume that deductive logic will lead to them. In his elucidation of "dialectical realism" in Nature, Man

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why I Leave the F.O.R.," Christian Century, Vol. 51 (January 3, 1934), p. 19.

and God, Temple exposes the inner workings of his theological thought. His deductive method is subject to a criticism we have already noted in Temple and that is "the difficulty about deduction is that we have no certain right to our starting-point."[1]

Temple acknowledges the ease with which men can agree on ultimate principles but the great problem in Christian social ethics is how we can arrive at "middle axioms." This is the problem of applying the ultimate principle to the practical problem. It is here that Temple often suggests that Christians may be in no better position to solve problems than anyone else because their solution may require a knowledge of technical matters beyond the competence of a man's religious commitment.[2] What Temple sees is the possibility of a Christian holding to all of the right principles but lacking in the know-how of making them work in society. The primary role of the church is to go on spelling out the principles.

The emphasis Temple makes on guiding principles should be supplemented by his emphasis on the "Christian spirit." It is from the Christian spirit that the right principles will emerge and it is the concern of the Christian which gives him motivational power to work for the good as he sees it. Temple, along with the other men in this study, does finally

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[1]William Temple, Mens Creatrix, p. 15.

[2]William Temple, Christianity and the Social Order, (London: Penguin Paperback, 1956), p. 99.

rest his case on the necessity of rationality in spelling out principles, in the effort of achieving them and in the resolution of issues when there is a conflict of principles.

Temple is never as critical of man's rational capacities as is Niebuhr and, on the other hand, he is not as systematic in determining its proper use as is Wieman. Temple operates on the assumption that knowledge is acquired in religion, and more specifically in ethics, by logic. Start out with any given number of premises and you open the way to any number of logical conclusions. Start with ultimate principles and you can logically work your way down to more specific principles.

Demant, like Temple, is committed to a concept of revelation. In contrast to Temple, he does not work out any systematic theological (or rational) justification of his view of revelation. From scripture and church tradition Demant acknowledges an emphasis on two orders: natural and supernatural. Insights into the nature of both orders come by way of revelation but especially in the natural order man is called upon to use his intelligence in understanding things "as they really are." The natural order has its own way of functioning so there is an "autonomy" attributed to the realms of politics and economics. Not only is there an "independence of the world" but there is also an autonomy of means as over against ends.

Temple and Niebuhr would consent to the natural and supernatural orders but neither would make such a radical distinction between the two as Demant is prepared to make. Wieman would completely reject this dichotomy with his objection to supernatural references. Wieman's naturalism includes factors which men like Demant would relegate to the supernatural realm. For example, Demant says, "that the power by which man departs from his essential nature cannot effect the recovery without the action of Divine Grace which is supernatural."[1] In contrast to that, here is Wieman's "naturalistic" view of grace:

> The conventional religious term for creative transformation operating beyond the control of conscious volition to save from evil is grace. ...The word tells us nothing about how the transformation operates nor what the required conditions may be under which it can operate most effectively. Therefore, unless we have empirical knowledge of what operates in the form of 'grace,' the word can do nothing more than give us the exalted feeling that we are not as other men because we are the recipients of God's grace. ...Christian faith has always claimed that divine revelation has been in the form of actual events. As said before, events can be distinguished in no other way than by sense experience.[2]

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[1] V. A. Demant, Theology of Society, p. 72.

[2] Robert W. Bretall (ed.), The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman, (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 4-5.

Demant would agree with Wieman's emphasis on events when he says, "The Christian religion is historical, attaching significance to concrete events, and not exclusively to ideals and theories."[1] But there is obviously a difference in the method by which events are interpreted. Wieman has gone further in trying to clarify what we mean when using religious terminology. Demant, Temple and Niebuhr use religious terminology in many cases without taking the time to say what they mean or on what basis they have accepted them as being true. They tend to rest their case on a dogmatic metaphysical certainty acquired by revelation. Only Wieman asks the question and seeks to answer it: "How do you tell a true from a false revelation?" or in more ethical terms, "How do you distinguish between good and evil?" Wieman insists this kind of knowledge can come only in the use of the scientific method or empiricism. Without sense experience there is no knowledge at all. There is less certainty in human affairs because observation, testing, experimentation and logical coherence with other known truths is not always a simple possibility. But we have no other basis on which to make claims that we are in possession of truth.

In contrast to the other men, Niebuhr has a tendency to rely on intuition. As Paul Tillich has said: "Niebuhr

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[1] V. A. Demant, Theology of Society, p. 107.

does not ask, 'How can I know?' He starts knowing."[1] Niebuhr has been a careful observer of history but some of his insights are based purely upon his own intuitional assertions. A creative imagination may help in understanding how human beings have acted in history but, to use a characteristically Niebuhr criticism, we can never be as certain of our judgments as Niebuhr implies he is in some of his sweeping generalities.

Not only in his interpretation of history but also in his social criticism, Niebuhr questions and corrects motives at the personal and national level which are beyond the certainty he claims for them. But his dialectical method always gives him an opposing insight which will serve as a corrective to the prevailing one. Niebuhr is critical of people and systems at the point of some neglected emphasis. No matter what decision has been made, Niebuhr points out some factor or motive which has been overlooked. One begins to think that Niebuhr wants ethical decisions that are like the man in the cartoon who has just made ski marks in the snow with one foot going around each side of the tree. Once you have decided to go on one side of the tree or the other, then Niebuhr comes along to tell you why you should have gone on the other side of the tree or he will suggest that your decision to go on one side of the tree is not as good a choice as you think it was. Maybe the alternatives were

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[1]Harold R. Landon (ed.), Reinhold Niebuhr: A Prophetic Voice in Our Time, (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1962), p. 60.

considered and after the decision has been reached there may not be as much inner certainty or self-righteousness as Niebuhr asserts. Niebuhr makes his pronouncements about the inevitable corruption of all human behavior and they stand partly because no one can disprove them.

The point Niebuhr makes is that there is no such thing as a perfect decision and the Christian faith "makes all human virtue problematic and sees all historic achievements as ambiguous."[1] Rather than paralysis in the face of a decision, Niebuhr urges action and then repentance.[2] The question, however, is how can you level criticism at a person for making a wrong choice when it is impossible for him to make a right one? Here is where Temple would part company with Niebuhr and say that the best possible choice would, under certain circumstances, be the right choice. Both Niebuhr and Temple were opposed to pacificism but Temple argued "that circumstances may arise in which it is right for a Christian to kill his fellow-men."[3] For Niebuhr the best possible act is wrong, while for Temple it is right.

Niebuhr, in agreement with Wieman, makes room for the empirical method: "These communal problems require above all the application of discriminating intelligence, which knows how to distinguish between constant and variable factors in

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 225.

[2] Ibid.

[3] William Temple, Thoughts in War-Time, p. 36.

a social situation and which is informed by the empirical spirit, by a genuine humility before the facts in defiance of dogmas, whether of a religious or rationalistic variety."[1] Wieman would insist that all knowledge (including religion and ethics) must be subjected to the use of a "discriminating intelligence." Temple is also willing to have all truth brought to the "bar of reason." Niebuhr insists that life and religion are ultrarational:

> Life itself is not rational. Reason may refine and qualify our central convictions and redirect and divert our central loyalties, but the loyalties themselves are religious because they spring from either primary or inherited conceptions of the meaning of life and the goal of existence, these invariably implying an ultrarational affirmation.[2]

Wieman would maintain that these ultrarational affirmations are subject to rational scrutiny and the truth or falsehood of them should be put to the test.

Niebuhr suggests that the virtues of a rational morality are "sober-mindedness and balance." The peril of such a morality is its tendency to destroy the "impulsive power" required for ethical action.[3]

Niebuhr goes on to say that "there is no final choice between reason and religion. There are too many virtues and

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 164.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Contribution of Religion to Social Work, p. 38.

[3] Ibid., p. 57.

too many vices in the camp of each."[1] But the question is, how did Niebuhr arrive at this conclusion? The difficulty in understanding Niebuhr is that he does not make enough clear distinctions in his use of the words reason, rationalism and rationality. He is critical of rationalism as representing a traditional view of man's effort to impose rigid and abstract methods of reasoning to the issues of human existence. These systems of thought simply do not do justice to the far reaching possibilities inherent in man's personal and social life. But surely Niebuhr is engaged in a use of his "discriminating intelligence" in arriving at the conclusion that life is ultrarational. We may rationally understand that something is irrational or ultrarational and in this sense Niebuhr does not give sufficient recognition to his own profound intellectual capacities. He is engaged in the use of rationality not only in his diagnosis of the human scene but also in his effort to help us understand what he is saying. It is his own reasoning process which has escaped Niebuhr's scrutiny. Here is where the self-conscious logic of Temple and the open empiricism of Wieman can serve as a corrective to Niebuhr's dialecticism. Niebuhr needs to answer Paul Tillich and tell us "how he knows."

Niebuhr is the only man in our study who honestly faces the problem of Jesus' irrelevance to social ethics. Jesus did not become involved in the issues of politics and economics. At the point of a personal or individual ethic

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[1] Ibid., p. 58.

Jesus had much to say. In addition to the apocalyptic note which might lessen the concern of Jesus for historical structures and the issues of social ethics, Niebuhr interprets agape as having dimensions of meaning which are beyond any easy fulfillment within history.

> The self-forgetfulness of agape is, in short, no simple possibility in life. The self does not get beyond itself by taking thought. Agape is nevertheless the final law of human existence because every realization of the self which is motivated by concern for the self inevitably results in a narrower and more self-contained self than the freedom of the self requires. ...These impossible possibilities describe the true norms of the self in its freedom over nature and history.[1]

In Jesus of Nazareth we can see how his kind of love "stands in contradiction to all structures, schemes and systems of justice, insofar as all historic schemes of justice embody sinful elements, because they contain implicit rationalizations of special interests."[2]

For Niebuhr the goodness of Christ must be "embodied in the stuff of history," but it must also stand in judgment of history. What we find in Christ is that the judgment and completion of history come by divine mercy and not by human achievement.[3] Not only is the cross a clue to the "trans-historical possibility of the fulfillment of life but also

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, pp. 198-200.

[2] Ibid., p. 220.

[3] Ibid., p. 242.

as an assurance of divine mercy, which closes the chasm between all fragmentary human virtues and the ultimate goodness."[1] Niebuhr then goes on to say that authentic Christianity holds us in a state of tension between optimism and pessimism about man in history.

Can we say there is a Christian social ethic? Niebuhr's answer is that "there is, in short, no social ethic in the love universalism of the gospel."[2] The Christian faith is not inimical to the social ethic but its primary emphasis is upon the individual. "It may prove also that the ultimate truths of the Christian faith are acceptable only to the individual, and are almost bound to be misused by collective man and his majesties."[3]

The Christian faith and its relationship to social ethics provides Temple with his "principles" and Demant with a revelation of "things as they really are." Niebuhr and Wieman see less relevance in Jesus to the issues of politics and economics and they proceed to develop a more "pragmatic attitude towards every institution of property and of government."[4]

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Structure of Nations and Empires, p. 136.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Godly and the Ungodly, p. 118.

[3]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Structure of Nations and Empires, p. 138.

[4]Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, p. 106.

All of our men except Niebuhr imply that there is a way to systematically approach ethics. For Niebuhr there is no way of devising a system of ethics which can give due credit to the drama of history and the freedom of man. There is an ultimate mystery in time and history.[1]

In the section on Wieman we briefly mentioned his inclination toward a "contextualist" view of ethics. Wieman insists that we must not identify his views with those of contextualism, both as a theory of value and as a metaphysic. In The Source of Human Good, Wieman discusses the four subevents which must be involved in "creativity":

> The four subevents are: emerging awareness of qualitative meaning derived from other persons through communication; integrating these new meanings with others previously acquired; expanding the richness of quality in the appreciable world by enlarging its meaning; deepening the community among those who participate in this total creative event of intercommunication.[2]

No other philosophy of value, according to Wieman, not even contextualism, has interpreted value in terms of this fourfold process.

In regard to the metaphysical distinction, Wieman suggests that for contextualism, change is ultimate:

> Nothing is immune to change; no structure, order, or form is permanent. Hence also there is no basic unity. Unities come and go, integrate and disintegrate, but nothing continues forever. In contrast to this view,

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 42.

[2] Wieman, The Source of Human Good, p. 58.

> the present writer asserts that there is something which retains identity and its unity through all change in other things. It is creativity. ...The creative event is always and absolutely good. It is always good in the sense of creating value.[1]

For Wieman there are a number of metaphysics which take some element of human existence and seek to explain everything else in terms of it. He has chosen creativity because he thinks "it provides a better guide to action than any other."[2] He rejects this as a pragmatic test in regard to truth because "a metaphysic must first meet the tests of truth before it can become a candidate for choice on grounds of utility."[3]

If ethics is an attempt to understand how values can be determined and enhanced then Wieman has come closer to meeting the challenge than any of the men in this study. He tries to clarify how we can determine what is true and good as over against what is false and evil. He does not resort in the final analysis to "revelation" for there must be some way by which we can distinguish between a valid or invalid revelation.

Biblical scholars have made an adaptation of the "scientific method" to their pursuit of truth. Theology and ethics are doomed to hopeless diversity and endless confusion

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[1] Ibid., pp. 298-299.

[2] Ibid., p. 301.

[3] Ibid., p. 301.

until there is agreement upon some commonly acknowledged method of determining truth. Of all our ethical realists, Wieman has made the greatest contribution in this direction.

Niebuhr's strength has been in the penetrating criticism he has levelled against the pretensions of man. Few men have destroyed as many illusions as Niebuhr. For him Christianity is in a state of perpetual warfare against those who think their proximate goals are man's final good and against those religionists who refuse to be involved in the frustrating affairs of man's ambiguous life in history. Niebuhr experienced a loss of faith in man--the cornerstone of liberal Christianity. It is a faith toward which men are naturally drawn and no one has smashed the idol more thoroughly than Niebuhr.

Whether ethical realism is only a passing episode in the course of Christian thought or a persistently recurring theme with insights of permanent worth -- only history can confirm.

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